HUNTER TRAVEL GUIDES

MARTINIQUE & GUADELOUPE ALIVE!

Lynne M. Sullivan

VISIT…

MARTINIQUE & GUADELOUPE ALIVE!

Lynne M. Sullivan

HUNTER

HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC.
130 Campus Drive, Edison, NJ 08818
☎ 732-225-1900; 800-255-0343; fax 732-417-1744
Hunterp@bellsouth.net
www.hunterpublishing.com

Ulysses Travel Publications
4176 Saint-Denis, Montréal, Québec
Canada H2W 2M5
☎ 514-843-9882 ext 2232; fax 514-843-944

The Boundary, Wheatley Road, Garsington
Oxford, OX44 9EJ England
☎ 01865-361122; fax 01865-361133

ISBN 1-58843-262-9
© 2002 Lynne M. Sullivan

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher. Brief excerpts for use in reviews or articles are permitted.

This guide focuses on recreational activities. As all such activities contain elements of risk, the publisher, author, affiliated individuals and companies disclaim any responsibility for any injury, harm, or illness that may occur to anyone through, or by use of, the information in this book. Every effort was made to insure the accuracy of information in this book, but the publisher and author do not assume and hereby disclaim, any liability for any loss or damage caused by errors, omissions, misleading information or potential travel problems caused by this guide, even if such errors or omissions are the result of negligence, accident or any other cause.

Maps by Kim André © 2002 Hunter Publishing, Inc.

Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, or criticism or review, as permitted under the relevant copyright, designs and patents acts, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted, in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publisher. eBooks Corporation

Acknowledgments

A very special thank you goes to Mr. Myron Clement at The Clement-Petrocik Company and Ms. Sylvie Régina at the Martinique Promotion Bureau for their invaluable assistance with this guide.

www.hunterpublishing.com

Hunter's full range of travel guides to all corners of the globe is featured on our exciting website. You'll find guidebooks to suit every type of traveler, no matter what their budget, lifestyle, or idea of fun. Full descriptions are given for each book, along with reviewers' comments and a cover image. Books may be purchased on-line using a credit card via our secure transaction system.

Alive Guides featured include: *Aruba, Bonaire & Curaçao, Buenos Aires & The Best of Argentina, Venezuela, The Cayman Islands, Cancún & Cozumel* and *The Virgin Islands*.

Check out our *Adventure Guides*, a series aimed at the independent traveler who enjoys outdoor activities (rafting, hiking, biking, skiing, canoeing, etc.). All books in this signature series cover places to stay and eat, sightseeing, in-town attractions, transportation and more!

Hunter's *Romantic Weekends* series offers myriad things to do for couples of all ages and lifestyles. Quaint places to stay and restaurants where the ambiance will take your breath away are included, along with fun activities that you and your partner will remember forever.

About the Alive Guides

Reliable, detailed and personally researched by knowledgeable authors, the *Alive!* series was founded by Harriet and Arnold Greenberg.

This accomplished travel-writing team also operates a renowned bookstore, **The Complete Traveller**, at 199 Madison Avenue in New York City.

We Love to Get Mail

This book has been carefully researched to bring you current, accurate information. But no place is unchanging. We welcome your comments for future editions. Please write us at: *The Alive Guides*, c/o Hunter Publishing, 130 Campus Drive, Edison, NJ 08818, or e-mail your comments to hunterp@bellsouth.net. You can also contact the author by e-mail through her website (www.travelynne.com), which contains island updates, comments from fellow travelers, and answers to readers' questions.

Contents

Acknowledgments iii
About the Alive Guides v
We Love to Get Mail v
Introduction 1
◆ The Islands 2
Location 2
Language 4
Lifestyle 5
A Shared Past 6
Life of the Arawaks & Caribs 6
Visitors From Europe 9
Climate 9
The Land 11
Plant Life 13
Birds 14
Mammals, Reptiles & Amphibians 15
Getting to the Islands 17
By Air 17
By Cruise Ship 19
Getting Around 21
Car Rental 21
Other Options 22
Best Places to Stay 22
A Look at the Options 22
Food & Drink 24
Common French & Créole Menu Items 25
Money Matters 28
Cash & Exchange Rates 28
Credit Cards 28
Entry Requirements 29
Health & Safety 29
The Best Attractions & Activities 32
Going Metric – Quick & Painless 33

Customs Regulations 33
Electricity 35
Time Zones 35
Martinique 37
◆ Overview 37
◆ A Brief History 38
Discovery by Columbus 38
Arrival of The French 39
Sugar, Slavery & The British 40
The 20th Century 41
Destruction of the Martyred City 41
Empress Josephine 43
◆ Getting to Martinique 44
Arriving By Air 44
Arriving By Sea 46
Ferry Service 46
Cruise Ships 46
Private Boats 46
◆ Getting Around 47
Car Rentals 47
Rates 47
Buses 48
Taxis 49
Ferries 49
◆ Festivals, Events & Holidays 50
Major Annual Events 50
Carnival 51
Public & Religious Holidays 51
◆ Exploring the Island 52
Fort-de-France 52
Place de la Savane 52
Fort Saint-Louis 54
Schoelcher Library 56
Archeological Museum 57
Cathédrale Saint-Louis 57
Sermac Floral Park 58
Marketplace 58

Southwestern Tour 59
Lamentin 59
Ducos 59
Trois-Ilets 60
Domaine de la Pagerie 62
Botanical Garden 62
Pointe du Bout. 63
Le Diamant 63
North Caribbean Coast Tour 64
Schoelcher 65
Case-Pilote. 65
Morne-Vert 66
Le Carbet. 66
Saint-Pierre. 67
Chest of the Dead 70
Habitation Céron. 70
Route de la Trace. 71
Balata. 71
Saint-Denis 72
Morne Rouge 73
Ajoupa-Bouillon. 74
Basse-Pointe 76
Grand Rivière 78
West Coast Tour 78
Le Robert. 78
Caravelle Peninsula 79
Morne des Esses 80
Sainte-Marie 80
Marigot 82
The Best Rum in the World. 82
Distilleries to Visit 84
Organized Tours 86
◆ Sunup to Sundown. 87
Fun in the Sun. 87
Beaches. 88
Southern Beaches 88
West Coast Beaches 94

East Coast Beaches 95
Diving & Snorkeling 95
Dive Centers 97
Boating 99
Boat Tours 100
Boat Rentals 101
Fishing 102
Big Game Fishing 102
Windsurfing & Other Watersports 102
Hiking 104
Trace des Jésuites 105
Caravelle Peninsula 106
La Trace des Caps 106
Le Piton de Crève-Coeur 107
Canal de Beauregard 108
Absalon Loop on Route de la Trace 109
Mont Pelée 109
Forêt de Montravail 110
Biking 111
Motorcycling 112
Golfing 112
Mini-Golf 113
Tennis 113
Horseback Riding 113
One-of-a-Kind Tours 114
Shop Till You Drop 116
Favorite Gift Items 116
Fort-de-France 117
Trois-Ilets 119
Le Diamant 120
Monésie 120
Sainte-Anne 120
Saint-Pierre 120
Along the Northern Atlantic Coast 121
◆ After Dark 121
Casinos 121
Island Shows 122

Discos, Nightclubs & Live Music 122
◆ Best Places to Stay 126
A Look at the Options 126
Resorts 126
Out-of-the-Way Choices 127
US Hotel Contacts. 127
Relais Créole Group 127
Gîtes 128
Vacation Homes & Villas 128
Vacation Packages 129
Pricing 129
Fort-de-France 130
Schoelcher 132
Trois-Ilets Resort Area 133
Sainte-Anne 140
Sainte-Luce 141
Le François 143
Caravelle Peninsula. 145
Marigot 145
Le Carbet 147
Basse-Pointe. 148
Camping 149
◆ Best Places to Eat 149
On the Menu 149
Dress. 150
Pricing 151
Tipping. 151
Fort-de-France 152
Fort-de-France Suburbs 156
Southern Martinique. 159
Northeastern Martinique 172
Northwestern Martinique 176
◆ Martinique A-Z 178
ATMs 178
Banking 178
Books & Maps 179
Climate 179

Credit Cards 180
Currency 180
Drinking Water 180
Electricity 180
Emergencies 180
Hospitals 181
Internet Resources 181
Language 181
Marriage Requirements 181
Political Status 182
Telephone 182
Time 182
Tourist Information 183
Guadeloupe & the Outer Islands. 185
◆ Overview. 185
◆ A Brief History. 187
Discovery by Columbus 187
Arrival of the Spanish & the French 188
Sugar Plantations & Slavery 188
The 20th Century. 190
◆ Getting to Guadeloupe. 190
Arriving By Air 190
Arriving By Sea 192
Ferry Service 192
Cruise Ships 192
Private Boats. 193
◆ Getting Around 193
Car Rentals 193
Rates 193
Cautions. 194
Buses 195
Taxis 196
Taxi Tours 197
◆ Festivals, Events & Holidays 197
Major Annual Events 198
Public & Religious Holidays 199
Grande-Terre & Basse-Terre. 201

◆ Exploring the Islands 201
Pointe-à-Pitre, Grande-Terre 204
Place de la Victoire 206
Quaie de La Darse. 207
Victor Schoelcher Museum 207
Sougues-Pagès House 209
Centre Saint-John Perse. 211
Southern Tour, Grande-Terre. 212
Aquarium de la Guadeloupe. 213
Fort Fleur d'Epée 213
Gosier & Ilet Gosier 214
Plage Caravelle 215
Sainte-Anne. 216
Beaches Along N4 216
Saint-François 217
Petite Terre 218
Pointe des Châteaux 218
Northern Tour, Grande-Terre. 219
Maison Zévallos. 220
Le Moule 220
Musée Edgard Clerc 221
Trou de Madame Coco. 222
Pointe de la Grande Vigie. 223
Morne-à-l'Eau 223
Southern Tour, Basse-Terre 224
Petit-Bourg 224
Sainte-Marie 225
Longueteau Rum Distillery 225
Plantation Grand Café 226
Capesterre Belle-Eau 226
Chutes du Carbet 227
Trois-Rivières & Vicinity 227
Vieux-Fort 228
Basse-Terre City 229
West Coast Tour, Basse-Terre 232
Baillif 232
Vieux-Habitants 233

Bouillante 234
Pointe-Noire 237
Deshaies 238
The Northern Loop, Basse-Terre 238
Saut de la Lézarde 239
Cascade aux Ecrevisses 239
La Maison de la Forêt 240
Col des Deux Mamelles 240
Sainte-Rose & Vicinity 241
Organized Tours 243
◆ Sunup to Sundown 244
The Very Best Attractions 244
Beaches 245
Basse-Terre Beaches 245
Grande-Terre's Southern Riviera 248
Other Beaches on Grande-Terre 252
Diving & Snorkeling 255
Dive Centers 257
Sailing 258
Boat Rentals 258
Boat Excursions 259
Fishing 262
Windsurfing & Other Watersports 263
Watersports Outfitters 264
Hiking 265
La Soufrière 266
La Citerne 268
Les Chutes du Carbet 2 268
Les Chutes du Carbet 1 269
Les Chutes du Carbet 3 269
Le Grand Etang 270
Pointe des Châteaux 270
Porte d'Enfer 271
Biking 271
Golfing 272
Tennis 273
Horseback Riding 274

Spa & Fitness Services 274
Shop Till You Drop 275
Favorite Gift Items 275
Shopping Areas 276
Best Shops on the Island 277
◆ After Dark 280
Casinos 280
Theater & Music 280
Bars, Nightclubs & Discos. 281
◆ Best Places to Stay 283
A Look at the Options 284
Hotels & Resorts 284
The Relais Créole Group. 284
Gîtes. 284
Villas 285
Package Vacations 285
Pricing 286
Grande-Terre 286
Point-à-Pitre 287
Bas-du-Fort/Gosier 288
Pointe de la Verdure/Gosier 290
Downtown Gosier & Surrounding Area. . . . 294
Between Gosier & St. Anne 296
Sainte-Anne. 297
Between Sainte-Anne & Saint-François . . . 300
Saint-François 301
Le Moule 306
Basse-Terre 307
Petit-Bourg & La Route de la Traversée . . . 307
Trois-Rivières 309
Saint-Claude 310
Deshaies. 312
Sainte-Rose 314
Camping 315
◆ Best Places to Eat 315
Dress. 316
Pricing 317

Tipping 319
Grande-Terre 319
Pointe-à-Pitre 319
Bas-du-Fort Marina & Gosier 323
Sainte-Anne 328
Saint-François 330
Le Moule 333
Campêche 334
Basse-Terre 335
Chutes du Carbet 335
Saint-Claude 335
Bouillante 336
Deshaies 338
Pointe-Noire 338
Sainte-Rose 339
Vieux-Fort 340
Trois-Rivières 341
La Désirade 341
◆ Overview 341
◆ A Brief History 342
◆ Getting to La Désirade 343
Arrival By Air 343
Arrival By Sea 343
◆ Getting Around 343
◆ Exploring the Island 344
Grande-Anse 344
Inland Trails 345
Coastal Treats 345
Adventures 346
◆ Best Places to Stay 346
◆ Best Places to Eat 348
Les Saintes 348
◆ Overview 348
Office of Tourism 349
◆ A Brief History 349
◆ Getting to Les Saintes 350
Arrival By Air 350

Arrival By Sea 351
◆ Getting Around 352
◆ Exploring the Island 353
Le Bourg 353
Hiking Trails 354
Coastal Treats 354
Adventures 355
Shop Till You Drop 356
◆ After Dark 357
◆ Best Places to Stay 358
◆ Best Places to Eat 361
Marie-Galante 365
◆ Overview 365
Office of Tourism 366
◆ A Brief History 366
◆ Getting to Marie-Galante 367
Arrival By Air 367
Arrival By Sea 367
◆ Getting Around 368
Guided Tours 369
◆ Exploring the Island 370
Grand-Bourg 370
Touring Les Bas 371
Touring Les Hauts 373
Adventures 374
◆ Best Places to Stay 375
◆ Best Places to Eat 377
◆ Guadeloupe & the Outer Islands A-Z 379
Airlines 379
Airport 380
Area 380
Area Code 380
ATMs 380
Banking 380
Buses 381
Camping 381
Capital 381

Car Rental Agencies 381
Climate 382
Credit Cards 382
Currency 382
Departure Tax 383
Documents 383
Dress 383
Drinking Water 384
Driving 384
Driving Permit 384
Electricity 384
Emergency 385
Ferry Service 385
Internet 385
Language 385
Location 386
Maps 386
Marriage Requirements 386
Political Status 386
Population 386
Store Hours 387
Taxes and Tips 387
Taxis 387
Telephone 387
Time 388
Tourist Information 388

Introduction

This book gives you up-to-date information and insider tips on spots often overlooked by other travel guides.

Best Places to Stay and *Best Places to Eat* cover a wide range of accommodations and restaurants so you may plan according to your budget and preferences.

Exploring the Island is designed as a turn-by-turn driving trip that includes reviews of all major towns and most small villages. *A Brief History* is included to enhance your sightseeing experiences, and *Festivals, Events & Holidays* are explained so you'll have more fun, whether you're a participant or observer.

Sunup to Sundown activities get special consideration, so you don't have to waste precious vacation time researching the best attractions. You'll find where to rent a bike, how to find the hiking trails, which dive sites are best, and what features make one tour operator different from another.

The *Shop Till You Drop* chapters include directions and reviews for open-air markets, upscale shops – even supermarkets. Special attention is given to resident artists and locally produced items.

After Dark suggestions include the best entertainment options, crowd-pleasing happy hours, and romantic hideouts.

Finally, the *A-Z* section gives you a quick reference for additional resources, important telephone numbers, and statistical data.

The Islands

Martinique and **Guadeloupe** are French islands lying between the Atlantic Ocean and Caribbean Sea in an archipelago know as the **Windward Islands** of the Lesser Antilles.

They share a laid-back pace, tropical climate, remarkable scenery, and abundant sun, sea, and sand. Yet, each has a distinct character and unique attractions. Many differences are subtle, but a visit to one is clearly unlike a trip to the other. While the independent English-speaking island of Dominica separates the two, distances are short, and it's quite possible to combine Martinique and Guadeloupe into one vacation.

Because the islands are French, tourists get a two-for-one holiday. French pride and bon vivant chic temper the hot, wild, astonishing beauty of the tropics, creating a faux France in the Caribbean. Both are overseas régions or départements of France with democratic representation in the National Assembly in Paris.

Location

Guadeloupe, the northernmost of the two islands, is about 1,500 miles southeast of Miami and approximately 1,763 miles east of Honduras, Central America. The Caribbean Sea is to the West. The Atlantic Ocean is to the East. **Dominica** lies between Guadeloupe and Martinique, with less than 30 miles of ocean separating each of the three islands. **Les Saintes**, **Marie-Galante**, and **Le Désirade** are less developed minor islands off Guadeloupe's southern shore.

The Caribbean
Florida
Bahama Islands
CUBA
HAITI
JAMAICA
HONDURAS
NICARAGUA
COSTA RICA
PANAMA
COLOMBIA
VENEZUELA
GUYANA
Caribbean Sea
PUERTO RICO
Virgin Islands
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Anguilla
Barbuda
Antigua
St. Kitts & Nevis
Guadeloupe
Dominica
Martinique
St. Lucia
St. Vincent
Barbados
Grenada
Trinidad & Tobago
Aruba
Curaçao
Tortuga
Margarita
Atlantic Ocean
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
© 2002 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

Language

French is the official language on Guadeloupe and Martinique. All residents study French in school, and many also know English. Nevertheless, on the streets the locals often speak **Créole**, a hybrid language derived from French, Spanish, Portuguese, and various African dialects. Plantation slaves started the language, and it was once considered a bastardized version of French, but today it is gaining respect as the written and spoken language of the Caribbean.

It helps to know French or carry a phrase book, but most tourist-oriented businesses employ a multilingual staff. Patience and a sense of humor will get you almost anything anywhere, but be prepared to use hand signals in some places. If you're short on patience and humor, stick to large establishments in the most touristy areas.

Here are a few basic French words and phrases to get you started. Once the locals hear you struggling, they usually will recall enough English to help you out.

ENGLISH	FRENCH	PRONOUNCED
Hello	bonjour	BON-zhoor
Good evening	bonsoir	BON-swah
Hi	salut	sah-LOO
Do you speak...	Parlez-vous...	PAHR-lay VOO
... English?	... Anglais?	ahn-GLEH
I don't speak French	Je ne parle pas Français	zhuh nuh pahrl pah frahn-say
Yes	oui	WEE
No	non	NOHN
Please	S'il vous plaît	seel voo PLEH
Thank you	merci	MEHR-see
Excuse me	excusez-moi	ehks-KEW-zay MWAH

A glossary of French & Créole food terms can be found in the "Food & Drink" section, page 25.

Lifestyle

Residents of Guadeloupe and Martinique enjoy a marvelous quality of life, and visitors may feel as if they're in a small town on the French continent. The corner boulangerie sells fresh-baked croissants, le jazz plays in the bistros, and haute cuisine is served to fashionably dressed patrons at upscale restaurants. The consequence is France-like prices, rush-hour traffic, and the usual cosmopolitan stresses.

Escape is easy. Simply walk through the colorful open-air markets, enjoy a sugary ti-punch, or take a drive along the marvelous French-quality roadways into the lush countryside. Retreat is even easier on the less developed outer islands.

Most of the million tourists who visit both Guadeloupe and Martinique each year are French, and the islands cater to them. However, North Americans are discovering the beauty and conveniently-foreign charm of the West Indies, and islanders recognize the benefit of making the Yankees feel at home. Currently, more than two-thirds of the half-million cruise-ship passengers who visit the French islands are US citizens, and airlines are increasing service to handle the growing demand for more flights from American gateways.

The majority of residents on both islands are black descendants of African slaves or mulattos with a mix of African and European ancestry. White citizens, called békés, and white French citizens living on the islands, called métros, control much of the economy and hold many administrative positions. As in France, literacy and life expectancy is high, infant mortality is low, and most residents consider themselves Catholics.

A Shared Past

Martinique and Guadeloupe share a common history with other Windward Islands. Stone Age civilizations may have inhabited Caribbean lands as early as 4000 BC, but only sparse evidence of their existence remains. Since early European explorers failed to write down details about the people they found living on the islands when they arrived, most current information is pieced together from archaeological discoveries.

Probably the first people to live on most of the Windward Islands were wandering **hunters-and-gatherers** of the pre-pottery or Archaic Period. Around the beginning of the Christian era, tribes from South America who spoke a language known as **Arawak** migrated to the islands. By the time Europeans arrived in the Southern Caribbean, most of these tribes had been displaced by aggressive South American groups known as **Caribs**.

Life of the Arawaks & Caribs

Each Arawak village had a chief who lived in a rectangular hut or *bohio*, while other members of the tribe lived in round huts called *caneyes*. Both dwellings were simple structures made of wooden frames topped by straw roofs, but they were sturdy enough to withstand hurricanes.

Villagers worshiped wooden and stone idols called *zemis*. These gods were thought to protect deserving humans from illness and storms, so the villagers offered gifts and food to them as tokens of devotion. A village and its chief were ranked in importance among the tribes by the number of *zemis* in their possession.

Arawaks were successful farmers and produced cassava (used in tapioca), maize, potatoes, peanuts, peppers, beans and arrowroot using the slash-and-burn method of cultivation. They had simple tools made of sticks, called *coas*, and may have used ashes or feces as fertilizers. In addition, they hunted and fished with baskets, nets and sharp sticks.

FISHING THE ARAWAK WAY

Large sea creatures were sometimes caught by using small **remora** fish as improvised "hooks." Remoras have suction disks on top of their heads that allow them to attach to other fish, such as sharks, in order to hitch a free ride and enjoy the scraps left over from the larger fish's kill. Arawaks connected these easily caught remoras to long sharpened sticks and held them under water so they could attach themselves to a passing shark or other large critter. Once a big fish was grasped by the remora, the fisherman had the relatively simple task of bringing in his catch.

Food was cooked on hot stones or over an open fire, using peppers, herbs and spices for flavor. Villagers preserved some foods with spices, but most was eaten fresh since the tropical climate allowed year-round farming, hunting and fishing.

The Caribs were more mobile and less ceremonial than the Arawaks. Their villages were smaller, sometimes made up of only extended family members with the head of the family acting as village leader. They

lived in little wooden huts arranged around a central fireplace, which was probably used for community meetings.

Village leaders supervised fishing, done by the men, and farming, which was done by the women. In addition, they mediated disputes among the people and led raids into neighboring settlements to capture wives for the young men in the village. Wives were often taken from Arawak tribes, most likely so that the women could raise the children with Arawak skills and manners.

Raids and combat were important activities for Carib men and their reputation as feared warriors is legend in the Caribbean. They attacked in long canoes that could carry up to 75 men, using poisoned arrows, javelins and clubs to subdue their foes. Reports spread that captured women were used as slaves or slave-wives. Seized men were cooked over ceremonial fires and eaten. However, European explorers never witnessed cannibalism and the Arawak accounts are questionable.

By the time Spanish explorers arrived in the late 15th century, the Arawak and Carib cultures had mingled somewhat peacefully and both tribes were spending more time on agriculture than fighting. Nevertheless, Europeans were intimidated by the appearance of the Indians, who painted their bodies in bright colors and wore gold or shell jewelry in their noses and ears.

You'll find additional historical details under "A Brief History" near the beginning of each island chapter.

Perhaps their appearance caused the Europeans to overreact and slaughter or capture the Indians on sight. The Arawaks quickly were wiped out, but the scattered, pugnacious Caribs managed to survive on some islands. In the 17th century, they were successful in resisting European settlement on Dominica and Saint Lucia. Carib descendants still live in Carib Territory on Dominica.

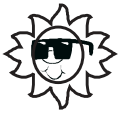
Visitors From Europe

Christopher Columbus visited both Martinique and Guadeloupe. He named them, sent a few men ashore to check things out, then sailed on rather than hassle the infamous Carib Indians, who were rumored to mutilate and eat their enemies.

For more than a century, all of Europe ignored the islands in favor of richer conquests in the Americas. Then, in the early 1600s, France and England recognized the potential value of the islands' sugar crops. Colonization began in earnest, slaves were brought in from Africa to work the land and native tribes were wiped out or banished to out-of-the-way reservations.

England and France bickered and fought over possession of the island colonies for years, and evidence of these cultures is mixed with African influences and native Carib traditions on both islands. Today, Guadeloupe and Martinique are considered French Overseas Departments.

Climate



As is typical of all the Caribbean, the northern Windwards enjoy a year-round average temperature of 77°F. Daytime highs occasionally reach 90°F, and nighttime lows may dip to 55°F, but temperatures usually range from 65°F to 85°F on most parts of the islands throughout the year. The ocean maintains an average temperature of 80°F.

A greater seasonal difference is found in rainfall. Summer, May to November, is rainy season. Winter, December to April, is dry season. Rainfall varies greatly from island to island and even from one side of an island to another. However, even during the wet season, most days have hours of sun. The humidity is made comfortable by *alizés*, cool trade winds that blow from the east and northeast.

TIP

You may want to avoid traveling here during peak hurricane season – mid-summer through early fall.

Hurricane Facts

- Hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30. Most of them occur from around the middle of August through the middle of October.
- A hurricane's winds flow counterclockwise in the Northern Hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern Hemisphere. Toward the storm's center the entire system is pushed by upper-atmosphere winds 10,000 to 40,000 feet above the earth.
- While any wind 75 mph or faster is *hurricane force*, such winds don't always come from hurricanes. They can also arise from tornadoes.
- Hurricanes form only over tropical oceans and their force weakens quickly when they move over land or cold water.
- Typhoons and hurricanes are basically the same type of storm. They are called typhoons

in the western part of the north Pacific. In the eastern part of the north Pacific, as well as the Atlantic, Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, they are called hurricanes. In the rest of the world, they are known as *tropical cyclones*.

- No hurricane has ever hit California, but they occasionally do hit Mexico's west coast.
- A small hurricane is about 100 miles wide; a large one may be 300 miles across.
- Some hurricanes last only a few hours before they weaken, while others maintain their strength for two weeks.
- Forecasters began naming hurricanes in 1950. At first they used words from the international phonetic alphabet – Able, Baker, Charlie, etc. Women's names common to English-speaking countries were first used in 1953. Beginning in 1979, forecasters began alternating male and female names common to French- , English- and Spanish-speaking countries.

The Land

Martinique and Guadeloupe are mountainous, with complex ecosystems. Tropical vegetation covers most areas, but in some places it's tropical desert and in others it's tropical rain forest. Several of the beaches have black volcanic rock; some are blanketed in fine golden or course gray sand, while others have soft, pure white sand. Spectacular volcanos, gorgeous waterfalls and miles of flat sugar plantations mingle

with dense forests, arid scrub brush and marshy salt ponds.

Each island's topography and flora is discussed in more detail in its individual chapter, but the following provides a general overview of what you'll encounter.

- **Martinique** is 417 square miles of hilly, volcanic land surrounded by magnificent beaches. The east coast receives much more rain and, consequently, is greener than the west side.
- **Guadeloupe** is really two islands divided by a narrow channel, connected by a bridge, and totaling 560 square miles. The western island, Basse-Terre, is volcanic, with rainforests and waterfalls. The eastern island, Grande-Terre, gets less rain and features white-sand beaches.
- **Marie-Galante**, the largest of Guadeloupe's outer islands, is an arid limestone and coral plateau divided into two parts by a deep chasm known as the Barre.
- **Les Saintes** are actually a cluster of mountaintops that jut out of the Caribbean off the southern tip of Guadeloupe's Basse-Terre. Only Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas are populated.
- **La Désirade** is a long, narrow slice of windblown land that stretches east off Guadeloupe's Atlantic coast. It has a rocky northern shore and sandy southern beaches.
- **Ile de la Petite Terre**, a tiny islet between La Désirade and Marie-Galante, is arid, rugged, and uninhabited.

Plant Life

Since rainfall varies from minimal to constant, the islands have a wide assortment of vegetation. You can visit mangrove swamps in the morning, climb into the lush rain forest in early afternoon and relax on a beach surrounded by desert scrub to watch the sunset.

Coconut palms and **seagrape** trees provide shade on many sandy beaches where few other plants survive. Islanders drink the liquid from the coconut shell before eating the soft meat inside, and purple seagrapes are sweetened and made into jams and desserts.

Flowering plants provide wild color on both islands. The gorgeous **flamboyant (poinciana)** tree shows off a blast of red flowers throughout the summer, and **African tulip** trees put out a marvelous orange blossom every spring. Pink **morning glory flowers** last only for a day along the beaches, but each sunrise brings forth a new batch.

Hibiscus is the most popular multicolored flowering tree in gardens. Red **anthurium**, orange **bird-of-paradise**, and a watercolor palette of **orchids** spring up in every yard. Even drier land supports colorful bushes such as **oleanders**.

Fruit trees are tended in private gardens and grow wild along the roadways. The local diet is based on an abundant year-round supply of **mangos**, **bananas**, **papayas**, **soursops**, **passionfruit**, **guavas**, and **coconuts**. Both the home cook and gourmet chef base their menus on whatever fruits and vegetables are ripe in the garden or for sale in the market each day.

Huge **gommier** and **chatagnier** trees are the tallest and most impressive in the rainforests. They tower

over a tangle of vines, ferns, mosses, and more than 300 other types of trees. Drier areas support **cactus** and **cedars**. Flat areas of both islands support large plots of **sugar cane**, **coffee**, and **vanilla**, and **mangrove** thickets line marshy coasts.

WARNING

One tree to watch out for is the machineel. They typically grow along the coast, and most are identified by signs or a line of red paint on the trunk. The sap and small fruit of this tree are poisonous and cause intense stinging if they come in contact with the skin. Illness or death can result from eating the fruit.

Birds

You don't have to be a birdwatcher to appreciate the vast number and variety of species that live on or migrate through the northern Windwards. They land on your table when you eat outdoors, tease you while you try to nap on the beach and steal small items off your patio when you're not looking. The following will help you identify a few of the most common winged wildlife:

- The **brown pelican** is grayish-brown with a long neck, long beak and short legs. It's usually seen feeding along the shore.
- The **magnificent frigate bird** has a wingspan that can reach more than six feet. They are jet black, and the males have red throats, while the females have white ones. They are pirates and hunt everywhere on the islands.

- The small **green-backed heron** has a distinctive call and gray-green feathers. The **great heron** has long legs and a long black feather growing from its white head.
- The **snowy egret** is white with black legs, while the **cattle egret** (usually found sitting on a cow) has white plumage and a tuft of orange feathers on its head.
- The **kingfisher** is blue with a white breast and a ruffled tuft on its head. It floats in the air looking for food and dives into the surf to catch fish.
- The **bananaquit** is a little bird with dark feathers on its back and a bright yellow throat and breast. It loves sugar and will make itself at home on your outdoor table.
- The **Guadeloupe woodpecker** is endemic to that island, but it is also endangered and rarely seen. Your only chance of spotting one is in the rain forest, where it builds nests.
- **Broad-winged hawks** are frequently seen soaring in wooded areas.
- Various species of **hummingbirds**, especially the purple-throated Carib, are often seen feeding among flowers.

The ubiquitous bananaquit is promoted by the tourist bureau as the symbol of Martinique.

Mammals, Reptiles & Amphibians

Wildlife on both islands is rather limited. The good news is there's not much around in the way of mammals to bite, sting, or attack you. The bad news is there's not much around at all. Other than rats and mice – which you probably don't care to see – wild mammals are limited to **raccoons**, **mongooses** (a ferret-like

animal) and an occasional **agouti** (a rodent that looks somewhat like a rabbit).

> ★ DID YOU KNOW?
>
> The racoon is the mascot of the National Park on Guadeloupe and is often pictured on park signs and literature. However, you probably will not see one alive outside a zoo since it is rare and on the protected species list.

Reptiles are more common, and you will have no trouble finding frogs and toads. The most interesting is the **tree frog**, which is tiny but puts on a loud symphony at night.

Common geckos – small, plain lizards – scurry everywhere along walkways, through window sills, and up walls (they usually run under something when you turn a light on at night). Be nice to them. They eat lots of mosquitoes. Carib Indians thought they carried evil spirits and spread rumors that they could only be removed from a person's skin with a scalding iron.

Iguanas look scary with their spiny backs, but they are strict vegetarians and don't care to share space with humans. These large lizards are rare and becoming rarer, so you'll only see them in a few remote areas, such as La Désirade and Les Saintes. The green iguana grows up to six feet long, with almost half of the length invested in a whip-like tail.

The islands have snakes, but not as many as you would expect, and most are harmless. However, the **fer de lance** that lives on Martinique is poisonous and extremely dangerous. You're not likely to run into

this snake unless you're in tall brush along river beds, but take extra precautions when you hike, especially if you go off heavily-used trails.

> **WARNING**
>
> Check with locals about recent snake sightings before you head into an unfamiliar area without a guide.

Sea turtles breathe air but live in warm oceans, except when the females come onto land to lay eggs. All species are endangered, and require 15-50 years to reach a reproductive age, so their nesting grounds on sandy beaches are protected by wildlife societies.

> **TIP**
>
> Despite the ban on hunting sea turtles, you may see products made from their shells for sale. Don't buy them.

Getting to the Islands

By Air

Visitors from North America have easy access to Martinique and Guadeloupe. **Air France** flies nonstop to the islands daily from Miami in about 4½ hours. During the winter, charter flights are available from Boston.

Air Jamaica and **BWIA** offer daily service from New York's JFK to Antigua or Barbados with **LIAT** connections to Martinique and Guadeloupe. Several ma-

jor airlines have nonstop flights from various US cities to Puerto Rico, where quick connections can be made to either of the islands on regional carriers.

If you can be flexible, you may be able to pick up a great last-minute bargain on airline tickets, cruises, or package vacations.

Four regional airlines serving the French islands of St. Martin, St. Barthélemy, Martinique and Guadeloupe have merged into **Air Caraïbes**. The new airline, headquartered in Guadeloupe and partnered with Air France, links more than a dozen airports, so travelers can quickly transfer from island to island once they are in the Caribbean.

Things change often in the airline business, so check with a travel agent who specializes in the Caribbean, or contact the carriers listed below for fares and flight information.

AIRLINE INFORMATION	
International Airlines	
American	☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com
Air France	☎ 800-327-2747 (in North America), 590-82-61-61 (on Guadeloupe), 596-55-33-33 (on Martinique); www.airfrance.com
Continental	☎ 800-525-0280; www.continental.com
Delta Air Lines	☎ 800-221-1212; www.delta.com
Northwest	☎ 800-225-7411; www.nwa.com
US Airways	☎ 800-428-4322; www.usair.com
United	☎ 800-241-6522; www.ual.com
Inter-island Airlines	
American Eagle	☎ 800-433-7300; www.aa.com
Air Caraïbes	☎ 590-82-47-00; fax 590-82-47-48 (based on Guadeloupe); www.aircaraibes.com
BWIA	☎ 800-538-2942; www.bwee.com
LIAT	☎ 800-468-0482; www.liat.com

If you plan to island-hop, LIAT and BWIA offer air passes that allow multiple stops during a fixed time period. These passes may be less expensive than indi-

vidual tickets, but they come with restrictions, so be sure to read the fine print.

Advice For Air Travelers

- Buy a round-trip ticket before you leave home. You must show a return or onward-going ticket off the island when you clear customs.
- Report for your flight earlier than you think you need to. Checking luggage and validating documents can be a slow process.
- In the Caribbean, small carriers sometimes take off before, as well as after, the scheduled departure time.
- Weight-and-balance limitations occasionally require that passengers or bags be left behind to take a later flight. Those who arrive at the airport last usually are the ones denied boarding.
- Pack light so you can handle your luggage without help.
- Turbo-props and small jets have little or no space for carry-on luggage. Pack valuables in a light shoulder bag and hope you'll be allowed to tote it aboard.

By Cruise Ship

Many cruise lines stop at both islands, but none of the conventional ships stay in port long enough to allow more than a cursory tour. If you want to spend time on the islands, look into the itineraries of smaller ships. If you want a quick overview of several islands in one

trip, take an eastern Caribbean cruise. A travel agency that specializes in cruises can help you choose a ship with the right itinerary, facilities, and price.

Look for an agent that belongs to the Cruise Lines Int'l Assoc. and subscribes to a publication called the Official Cruise Guide.

If you don't find a local travel agency that knows the cruise business well, check with the following for information:

SPECIALIST CRUISE TRAVEL AGENTS	
Cruise.com (owned by Omega World Travel, Inc.	☎ 800-303-3337; www.cruise.com
Cruise Outlet (a division of The Travel Company)	☎ 800-489-0525; fax 704-541-0665; www.cruiseoutlet.com; E-mail cruise@cruiseoutlet.com
The Cruise Web, Inc.	☎ 800-377-9383; fax 202-333-8401; www.cruiseweb.com; E-mail office@cruiseweb.com
World Wide Cruises	☎ 800-882-9000; www.preferr.com

Destinations change as new ships are built and cruise companies adjust their itineraries, but the following lines are the most likely to offer stops on the French islands covered in this guide:

CRUISE LINE INFORMATION	
Cruise lines offering larger vessels	
Carnival Cruise Lines	☎ 800-327-7276; www.carnival.com
Celebrity Cruises	☎ 800-CELEBRITY; fax 800-722-5329; www.celebritycruises.com
Cunard Line	☎ 800-528-6273; www.cunardline.com
Holland America	☎ 800-426-0327; fax 800-628-4855; www.hollandamerica.com
Norwegian Cruise Line	☎ 800-327-7030; fax 305-436-4106; www.ncl.com
Princess Cruises	☎ 800-774-6237; fax 310-277-6175; www.princesscruises.com

Royal Caribbean Cruise Line	☎ 800-327-6700; fax 305-374-7354; www.royalcaribbean.com
Cruise lines offering smaller vessels	
Ships with a shallow draft are able to navigate narrow passages and dock in small ports. They depart from ports in the Caribbean, so the extra cost for airfare may increase your overall expenses.	
American Canadian Caribbean Cruise Line	☎ 800-556-7450; www.accl-smallships.com
Clipper Cruise Line	☎ 800-325-0010; fax 314-727-6576; www.clippercruise.com
Windjammer Barefoot Cruises	☎ 800-327-2601; www.windjammer.com
Windstar Cruises	☎ 800-258-7245; fax 206-286-3229; www.windstar.com
Star Clippers	☎ 800-442-0551; fax 305-442-1611; www.starclippers.com

Getting Around

Visitors easily can arrange to stay on more than one island during their vacation. The inter-island air carriers listed earlier offer daily flights, and some of the islands are close enough for day trips, either by plane or by boat. Each island chapter suggests daytrips to neighboring locations, with contact numbers for tour organizers.

Car Rental

Most agencies won't rent vehicles to anyone under age 25.

Car rentals offer the most freedom and flexibility, and major companies operate on both of the main islands. You'll get the best deal by booking in advance from the US, but if you plan to rent just for a day or two of sightseeing, you will have more flexibility if you check in town or at your hotel after you arrive.

Each island section gives details on renting all types of cars, bikes, motorcycles, and boats. Ask at the

rental office about the need for a local driving permit if you don't have an international license. For the most part, the roads are good, and driving is on the right side, as in France.

> **TIP**
>
> Ask at the rental office about the need for a local driving permit if you don't have an international license.

Other Options

Taxi and bus service is available on outer islands (see appropriate chapter details on costs and routes). Most hotels can recommend reliable driver/guides for full-day or half-day tours, but be sure to agree on a price and itinerary before you step into the vehicle.

> **TIP**
>
> Remember that public transportation may be by minivans, which are sometimes crowded with locals going about their daily routine.

Best Places to Stay

A Look at the Options

Guadeloupe and Martinique offer excellent resorts and luxury hotels. You also can find inexpensive guesthouses and charming cottages with kitchen facilities on the main islands and many of the outer islands.

GITES

Gîtes are popular with European visitors. They are privately-owned holiday accommodations, usually located in rural areas. Most are self-contained cottages, but some are the equivalent of a bed and breakfast. Often, the owner has received a grant from the French government, which obligates him to meet certain quality standards, but comfort levels vary.

Many choices are detailed for each island, but a few generalities apply:

- Most hotels discount rooms from mid-April through mid-December, with the lowest rates available during the summer months.
- Small establishments may close annually during off-peak months, and larger hotels often schedule renovations at that time.
- New resorts frequently run tempting specials to bring in guests.
- Government taxes and service charges will be added to quoted prices unless specifically stated otherwise.

Reservation services and US contact numbers are listed along with other information about individual accommodations on each island. You may negotiate a better rate by calling the hotels directly, especially if you plan to visit during low season or within a few days of making the reservation. However, travel agencies often know of money-saving specials, and last-minute Internet deals usually can't be beat.

Food & Drink

You can eat as well on Guadeloupe and Martinique as in France. Even little out-of-the-way cafés take tremendous pride in serving exquisite cuisine, whether it's French or Créole. Fast-food chains are scattered about and they are handy for quick snacks, but discovering a little dive with a great chef is part of the adventure on these islands.

West Indian food is typically local vegetables served with fresh seafood. Créole adds a spicy mix of African and Caribbean seasonings – and perhaps a slice of grilled goat. Traditional French favorites such as crêpes, quiche, and soupe à l'oignon can be found at sidewalk cafés, and cuisine gastronomique (a creative mix of French and Créole) is popular in many restaurants.

Food can be expensive in the Caribbean, but usually is worth it. To give you an idea of what to expect, the Alive Restaurant Price Scale includes four categories, and restaurant recommendations are given for each price range on each island. You can save a little overall by eating breakfast from the bakery and making a picnic of fresh fruit and cheese for lunch. Then you will feel free to blow almost an entire day's budget on an outstanding restaurant dinner.

As in France, meal costs on Martinique and Guadeloupe usually include the server's tip (look for the words *service compris* printed at the bottom of the menu), but it's polite to leave a bit of additional change on the table anyway.

Most restaurants in the main towns accept major credit cards, but it's a good idea to have some cash available for smaller establishments outside the tour-

ist areas. US dollars often are accepted on the islands, but you may get an unfavorable conversion rate and almost always receive change back in local currency.

Common French & Créole Menu Items

accras or amarinades: Spicy doughnuts/fritters usually made from cod or other fish, but sometimes from vegetables.

balaou: Small fried fish.

bananes: Either immature "vegetable" bananas, *tinain*, which must be cooked, or ripe "fruit' bananas, which may be eaten raw.

bébélé: Dish made of boiled sheep tripe and green bananas.

beignets: Donut-like sweet fritters.

bière: Beer.

bière pression: Draft beer.

blaff: Spicy lime-and-garlic bouillon in which fish is cooked. The word is said to come from the sound the fish makes as it hits the boiling liquid.

blanc-mange: Coconut flan or gelatin dessert.

boudin noir: Blood sausage (not to be confused with Louisiana-style boudin or boudin blanc, which is a pork sausage).

breadfruit: Large melon-like fruit.

cabri: Small, bony goat, usually prepared as *colombo* (see below) or smoked.

calalou or callaloo: Soup made with herbs, vegetables, crab and pork.

carambole: Yellow star-shaped fruit that is eaten raw or made into juice.

chadron: Sea urchin.

chatrou: Small octopus.

chou coco: An unusual dish made from the heart of the coconut tree which is eaten raw.

christophine: Vegetable similar to a potato, particularly delicious when prepared au gratin.

cirique: A small crab.

colombo (curry): In the Caribbean, it is usually a mild green curry that is not as hot as Indian curry. The most common colombo will be made with cabri, small goat, but occasionally chicken or pork is used.

corossol: A white-fleshed fruit.

court-bouillon: Tomato, pepper and onion mix.

crabbe de terre: Land crab. Islanders make the meaty creatures more flavorful by feeding them a diet of coconut and hot pepper.

dombre: A small flour croquette.

écrevisses: Freshwater crayfish.

féroce: Avocado, hot pepper and cod salad.

fricassée: Fish or meat browned and stewed in a skillet.

fruit à pain: Breadfruit.

fromage: Cheese.

giraumon: Pumpkin.

igname: Any of a wide variety of yams.

lambi: Conch, pronounced "konk," a large shellfish.

langouste: Caribbean lobster, no claws.

manioc: Cassava/tapioca flour.

maracudja: Passionfruit.

matoutou: Crab fricassée.

migan: Mashed bananas and breadfruit.

ouassous: Another name for freshwater crayfish, most commonly used on Martinique.

oursin: Sea urchin.

pain: Bread.

pâté en pot: A thick soup usually made with otherwise-unusable parts of a goat, vegetables, capers, white wine and a splash of rum.

patate douce: Sweet potato.

poisson: Fish.

prix fixe: Fixed-price meal.

punch planteur: Planter's punch made with rum, fruit juice and sugarcane syrup.

schrub: A liqueur made by soaking oranges in rum.

soudons: Sweet clams.

souskai: Green fruits, grated and macerated in lime juice, salt and hot pepper.

table d'hote: Chef's specialty of the day.

ti-nain: A small banana, cooked like a vegetable. It is not as sweet as the larger variety.

ti-punch: Drink made of rum, sugarcane syrup and lime.

titiris: Tiny fish.

touffé: Braised.

z'habitants: Another word for large crayfish, often seen on menus in Guadeloupe.

Petit déjeuner *means breakfast, while* déjeuner *means lunch. An* entrée *is an appetizer, not a main course.*

Money Matters

Cash & Exchange Rates

Through December, 2001, the French franc (FF) will be the official currency on Guadeloupe and Martinique. On January 1, 2002, the islands will join France and 11 other Western European nations in converting to the euro (€). All francs will be out of circulation on or before February 28, 2002.

The symbol for the euro is €.

At publication, the French franc was exchanging at a rate of approximately 7.5FF per US dollar; the euro was valued at around 86¢, 60 British pence or 1.33 Canadian dollars. All price given are approximate.

One euro is divided into 100 cents. Coins come in denominations of 1 and 2€, and 1, 2, 5,10, 20 and 50 cents. Bills are in denominations of 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500€.

Credit Cards

Don't count on using credit cards outside the main tourist areas or in small establishments.

The most widely accepted credit cards are Visa and Eurocard/MasterCard. Many shops, restaurants, and hotels will take travelers' checks issued in US dollars, but usually give change in local currency. Consider carrying travelers' checks for convenience, but plan to cash a few each day at a bank or currency exchange office so you will never be without acceptable funds.

Remember to have enough cash for cab fare when you arrive at your destination so you won't be forced to overpay or accept a poor exchange rate. Carry small bills because bag handlers and taxi drivers may claim they have no change or, even worse, offer fists full of local coins as change for large-denomination bills.

Entry Requirements

Caribbean islands are glad to see you, but anxious to know when you'll be leaving. Before entering Guadeloupe or Martinique, you must show a return or onward ticket off the island. Immigration officers also ask where you will be staying to insure that you have legitimate intentions, so be prepared to give an address, even if your plans are uncertain.

A current passport will get you onto both islands, and will prevent delays or complications during your travels. However, if you don't have one, you're a citizen of the US or Canada traveling for pleasure, and your stay will be shorter than three months, you may show some type of government-authorized photo identification (such as a valid driver's license) **plus** one of the following:

Specific entry details are covered under the "Getting To" sections in individual island chapters.

- A passport that expired fewer than five years ago.
- An official birth certificate (not a photocopy).
- A valid voter's registration card.

A valid passport is required for stays longer than three months or for non-tourist visits (to conduct business or to work). A valid passport and visa are required for resident aliens of the US or Canada and residents of countries other than the US, Canada, the European Union or Japan.

Health & Safety

Guadeloupe and Martinique have low crime rates and few health dangers. Of course, commonsense precautions are necessary.

- **Drink only bottled water**. While tap water is generally safe on the islands, bottled water is easy to find, so why take a chance?
- **Eat in clean restaurants** with a heavy tourist trade. But keep in mind that some of the best meals are found in small family-run cafés and in areas without many tourists. If the locals eat there, or recommend that you do, it's probably OK.
- **Avoid raw fish**, undercooked meats and eggs, as well as foods that might have been on the buffet table too long.

TIP

Research shows that chewing a couple of Pepto-Bismol tablets before every meal may prevent travelers' diarrhea. A short-term course of preventive treatment probably won't hurt you (unless you're allergic to aspirin products or take blood-thinning medication), but check with your doctor before you leave home.

- If you bring **medications** with you from the US, leave them in their original container. Customs agents get nervous when they see loose pills inside luggage.
- Bring high-SPF waterproof **sun block**. The Caribbean sun is strong year-round and you may not notice that you're burning if a cool wind is blowing or there's a cloud cover.

TIP

Pre-tan products (different from no-sun tanning lotions) prepare your skin with extra melanin to help you tan instead of burn.

- **Don't touch anything** in the ocean or on land unless you know what it is. Some of the most beautiful sea creatures and wild vegetation cause nasty rashes and painful abrasions.

WARNING

Manchineel trees (mancenilla in French) are particularly troublesome because the fruit, leaves, and sap are poisonous and cause severe skin blisters. Never stand under one during a rain storm, because sap can wash off the tree and harm you. The trees have round, shiny green leaves and fruit that resembles a small, green apple. Most trees are marked with red paint, especially in tourist areas, but be cautious on secluded beaches.

- **Bugs** are a part of the Caribbean, especially in dense forests and around lakes. You probably won't be bothered when a breeze is blowing or in open areas during daytime, but remember that insects are drawn to sweet smells such as perfume. Wear lightweight long-sleeve tops and long pants when you hike into wooded areas. If you want extra protection, use a bug repellent containing

DEET. Some people have good results with various natural repellents. Vitamin B-1 (thiamine) in 100 mg tablets, taken up to three times daily, is said to cause an odor that humans can't detect but insects detest. Bugs also hate the smell of chlorine, so frequent dips in the hotel pool might be a good idea.

The Best Attractions & Activities

Each of the northern Windward islands offers special things to do that you will long remember. Here are a few must-do suggestions:

Hike some of the 180 miles of trails that run through the 74,000-acre **Parc National** on Guadeloupe.

Sail around the eight-island archipelago of **Les Saintes** off the Guadeloupe coast to find a perfect beach.

Drive the famous **La Trace** route through the rain forest on Martinique.

Get an **all-over tan** on one of the *au naturel* French beaches.

Savor the peace and quiet on **La Désirade island**.

Shop for **colorful Caribbean art** or **French fashions** on Martinique.

Explore an **abandoned sugar mill** on Marie-Galante.

Bike along the flat roads of Guadeloupe's **Grande-Terre**.

Climb to the top of **Mont Pelée** on Martinique.

Splurge on a fabulous meal at one of the best **gourmet restaurants**.

Going Metric – Quick & Painless

TEMPERATURE

Temperature is converted from °C to °F by multiplying the Celsius temperature by nine, dividing the result by five and adding 32.

Too hard? Here's about all you need to know while you're in the Caribbean:

15°C	equals	59°F
20°C	equals	68°F
25°C	equals	77°F
30°C	equals	86°F
35°C	equals	95°F

IN THE MARKET

At the market, if you want a pound of fruit, ask for half a kilo. When you buy gas, you'll need almost four liters to make a gallon. If the distance from one town to the next is 10 kilometers, that's a little over six miles. The real numbers work out this way:

1 kilogram	equals	2.2046 pounds
1 pound	equals	0.4536 kilograms
1 liter	equals	1.06 quarts, 0.264 gallons
3.8 liters	equals	4 quarts or one gallon
1.6 kilometers	equals	1 mile

Customs Regulations

Be sure to keep receipts for everything you buy while on vacation. When you return home, you'll be required to list all purchases that you are bringing back, and you may be asked to show customs officials what you bought.

Customs regulations are complex and vary with each country. Citizens of countries other than the United States and all travelers who plan to make expensive or unusual purchases would be wise to check with the appropriate agency before leaving on vacation.

- US Customs Service, ☎ 202-927-6724; www.customs.gov/travel/travel.htm
- US Department of Agriculture, ☎ 340-776-2787
- Revenue Canada, ☎ 613-993-0534
- HM Customs and Excise (for UK citizens), ☎ 0171-202-4227

As a US citizen, you may bring home $400 worth of goods from Guadeloupe and Martinique duty-free, if you've been out of the country for at least 48 hours and haven't claimed your exemption allowance within the past 30 days. Note that this exemption is less than for the islands that are part of the Caribbean Basin Initiative, which allows a higher ($600) exemption.

When you visit a CBI island and a non-CBI island on the same trip, you qualify for $600 in exemptions, but only $400 may be from the non-CBI island. You can avoid the hassle of figuring out this formula by simply keeping your purchases within the $400 limit. However, if you think you might exceed the standard exemption or want more information on regulations, call the US Customs Service, ☎ 202-927-6724; www.customs.org.

US residents over the age of 21 are allowed to bring home one liter of alcohol duty-free, and anyone may bring in 200 cigarettes or cigars – but not those from Cuba.

Antiques more than 100 years old get in duty-free, and you won't be taxed on original art if it's done entirely by hand. However, a machine-made frame that borders the original art may be taxed if its value exceeds the exemption allowance.

In addition, you may mail up to $200 worth of goods to yourself or someone else duty-free. This is a liberal exemption that applies to one package per address per

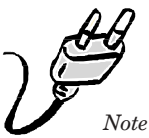
day. Just label the parcel "Personal Use," and don't try to sneak in alcohol, tobacco, or perfume worth more than five dollars. Mailed purchases do not reduce your duty-free allowance when you return home.

Duty-Free Shops

A duty-free shop is one that has not paid import duties on the merchandise it is selling. This may mean that the item is less expensive than if you bought it in a regular store. However, when you return home, purchases from duty-free shops must be listed and are subject to US Customs duties if they exceed the allowed exemptions.

Electricity

You'll need a **transformer** to convert the voltage from 220 to 110 and adapters to allow you to insert your appliance's plug into the outlet.



Note that dual-voltage computers and appliances will also need a plug

Some hotels have adapters, but rarely transformers, that you may borrow during your stay. However, conversion devices are relatively inexpensive, so pick up a set at a travel store or electrical shop before you leave home.

Time Zones

Martinique and Guadeloupe are on **Atlantic Standard Time**, which is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time. Neither island observes daylight-saving time, so during the summer they are on the same time as the eastern United States.

Martinique

Overview

The earliest inhabitants called it *Madinina*, the island of flowers, and Christopher Columbus was so awed by it that he wrote "it is the best, most fertile, the softest... the most charming place in the world." You'll understand these accolades when you see Martinique for the first time. The volcanic mass is covered in luxuriant greenery, outlined in soft sand and sprinkled with colorful blooms.

Part of the Lesser Antilles, the island is separated from its French sibling, Guadeloupe, by the British island of Dominica. **Mont Pelée**, a 4,470-foot active volcano, dominates the far northern region and the lofty peaks of the **Pitons du Carbet** tower over the central plains. Inland, a dense rain forest provides shelter for an array of wild vegetation. To the south, the terrain turns hilly, with rounded formations called *mornes,* and uncommon succulents thrive in the arid soil.

Tourists are drawn to the white-sand beaches that line the southern coast – washed by the Caribbean to the west, battered by the Atlantic on the east. Most of the island's activity is centered around the bay that cuts deeply into the southwestern shoreline. The bustling capital city of **Fort-de-France** wraps around the north side of this bay. The most popular resort towns stretch along its south side.

Martinique has traditionally been called "the Paris of the Antilles" and "a little piece of France in the Carib-

bean." Evidence of this truth is everywhere and, although there are other French Caribbean islands, Martinique radiates more of the culture and charm of cosmopolitan Paris. Restaurants serve *haute cuisine*, stores display *haute couture* and people speak *haute Français.* However, in true West Indies fashion, you're just as likely to be served spicy Créole food at a beach-side café by an islander wearing madras and speaking thickly-accented patois.

Don't let rumors of unfriendly French islanders keep you away from this fabulous vacation spot. Perhaps the locals were a bit aloof in the past, but recently they have taken giant steps toward making Americans feel welcome. Most hotels employ English-speaking staff. Traffic signs are being posted in both French and English. Taxi drivers, tour guides, shopkeepers and restaurant employees are taking language lessons and anxiously looking for occasions to practice their pronunciation.

A Brief History

Discovery by Columbus

Columbus procrastinated about the exploration of Martinique. He landed his crew on the shores of Dominica, Marie-Galante and Guadeloupe as soon as his ships came upon them during his second voyage in 1493, but he had heard disturbing stories about the mystical island to the south, so he was in no hurry to go there.

The stories had come from natives on Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic). During his first voyage, the **Arawak** and **Ciguayo Indians** had

warned him of flesh-eating tribes and dangerous Amazon women. So, if Columbus passed near the shores of Martinique in 1493, he said little about it, and certainly didn't disembark. However, by 1502, during his fourth voyage, he summoned the courage to land his fleet on the northwest coast near today's town of **Le Carbet**.

What he found was an island of incredible beauty inhabited by the same **Carib Indians** that he had encountered on all the other islands in the Lesser Antilles. While the Caribs were not glad to see him, they were no larger or more ferocious than their inhospitable (and possibly cannibalistic) kinsmen on other islands. Nevertheless, once it was determined that *Martinica* (named after Saint Martin) lacked gold or other valuable resources, the Spanish showed little interest in colonizing it.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Carib Indians began migrating to the Caribbean from South America in skillfully crafted boats about 1000 AD. They were merciless warriors and conquered the peaceful Arawak Indians who had lived on the islands for hundreds of years.

Arrival of The French

The French arrived in 1635. **Pierre Bélain d'Esnam- buc** set up a little colony on the northwest coast at the foot of Mont Pelée. That colony became the future capital city of **Saint-Pierre**. When d'Esnambuc died two years later, his nephew, **Jacques du Parquet**, assumed leadership. Parquet

During Parquet's administration, King Louis XIII authorized the importation of slaves from Africa to work on French sugar plantations.

was a sharp arbitrator and aggressive businessman who managed to simultaneously pacify the Caribs, set up profitable sugar-producing colonies and build Fort Royal to guard against foreign invasion. Martinique prospered under Parquet's direction, but after his death the French settlers grew greedy and militant and began to attack Carib villages and take over their land. In 1660, the small number of Caribs who survived were banished to other islands.

Sugar, Slavery & The British

As Martinique's sugar production increased and "white gold" became more valuable in Europe, the British started to take an interest in the island. Between 1762 and 1814, England and France battled for control, but Martinique prospered under both countries rule, and the *béké* plantation owners grew rich and powerful through the labor of their black slaves.

Finally, in 1848, when plantation owners had lost some of their clout due to successful cultivation of sugar beets in Europe, French cabinet minister Victor Schoelcher was able to convince Martinique's officials to sign the Emancipation Proclamation that ended slavery. Almost immediately, thousands of indentured workers from India poured onto the island to replace slave labor.

But the sugar market had taken too many blows, and the once-thriving factories began to close. Today, only one company still produces sugar on the island.

After the two world wars, Martinique's status as a French colony was upgraded to that of a *département d'outre-mer* – an overseas department. This classification guaranteed islanders every benefit granted all French citizens. Later, it became a French *région*,

with the representation of four deputies in the National Assembly and two senators in the Sénat.

The 20th Century

Destruction of the Martyred City

At the beginning of the 20th century, Martinique's first town and original capital, Saint-Pierre, already enjoyed electricity, telephones, modern plumbing, mass transportation and newspapers. It was called "little Paris," and "the pearl of the Antilles." Life in the commercial port city was lively, privileged and cultured. Its 30,000 residents were highly educated, fashionably dressed connoisseurs of art, wine, food and architecture.

Then, at 8 o'clock on the morning of May 8, 1902, it all ended in a flash, as ***Montagne Pelée*** spewed incandescent gas and molten ash over the town and its inhabitants. Everything in the town and its port was buried. All but one of its residents died.

So what went wrong? How could a disaster of such magnitude take an entire city of intelligent people by surprise?

Some historians blame politics. Scientists say it was a type of eruption that was unknown at that time. Most likely, a combination of politics and an obscure phenomenon mixed with hapless fate to cause the massive catastrophe.

Saint-Pierre was founded in 1635 when Pierre Bélain d'Esnambuc arrived from France to set up a little colony on the northwest shore of Martinique. He constructed a small fort and chapel around which others built their houses, and named the settlement after the saint for whom he was christened. As more and more

colonists arrived, two more chapels were built as centers for development, and the town naturally divided into three *quartiers*.

Saint-Pierre thrived and, even after the administrative capital was moved south to Fort-de-France, was the most important city on Martinique. On occasion, an earthquake would shake the buildings, or a deep rumble would come from the direction of the volcanic mountain that towered over the town. Yet, no one was disturbed enough to interrupt their pleasant lifestyle in order to investigate.

A Martinique legend maintains that Mont Pelée destroyed St-Pierre as the result of a curse put on the French by the mistreated Caribs.

Early in 1902, some residents had begun to chat casually about the smell of sulphurous steam in the area. A few authorities commented that boiling water was filling a crater lake on the mountain. No one worried.

When scalding water and mud poured down the mountain and buried a plantation late that spring, several families sent their children to live with relatives on other parts of the island. But the governor of Martinique assured everyone that there was no cause for alarm. To prove his conviction, he brought his family from Fort-de-France to stay in Saint-Pierre.

On April 25, local officials were in the midst of an intense election campaign when Mont Pelée belched a few hot ashes onto the city. No need to panic, they said. Hardly anything to disrupt a campaign about, they insisted.

As May began, a series of lava flows affected nearby towns and plantations, but residents of Saint-Pierre went about their business. On the 5th of May, a tidal wave hit the city's port, threw ships onto the beach and knocked down a few buildings. Still, the residents stayed.

Then, on May 8, as children finished their breakfasts and men hurried to the office, the volcano erupted in a

flaming cloud of gas and ash. The force is said to have been more powerful than the blast of a nuclear bomb. Asphyxiating fumes and intense heat overtook the city and harbor within 90 seconds, and everything was buried where it stood.

Divers can explore the 11 ships that sank in St-Pierre's harbor in 1902.

Only one man survived the destruction of Saint-Pierre. Cyparis was locked in the local jail for being drunk and disorderly. Built around 1660, his dungeon-like cell had thick walls that saved his life. French sailors found him, burned and hungry, on May 11 as they dug through the rubble that was once a thriving city. Cyparis celebrated his rescue and liberation by joining P.T. Barnum's circus, and toured for many years as the sole survivor of Mont Pelée.

Empress Josephine

Martinique's Most Famous Citizen

Marie-Josèphe Rose Tascher de la Pagerie (called "Josephine") was born in Trois-Ilets in June 1763 on an estate that was known as *Petite Guinée*, Little Guinea.

Popular legend says a sorceress named Euphrèmie David predicted at her birth that she would be *more than a queen* one day. She married Alexandre de Beauharnais, a wealthy officer of the French army, in 1779 when she was 16 years old. Josephine and Beauharnais had two children together: Eugène, who became the Viceroy of Italy; and Hortense, who became the Queen of Holland.

Josephine and Beauharnais were imprisoned in 1794, during the French Revolution. Beauharnais was guillotined. Josephine was released after a brief time.

She met and fell in love with Napoleon Bonaparte when he was an unknown military officer and mar-

ried him twice, once in a civil ceremony and again in a religious ceremony. Both marriages took place before Napoleon became emperor by placing a crown on his own head December 2, 1804. As empress, Josephine was active in French society and she started many social trends. But Napoleon had his marriage to Josephine annulled in 1809 because she was unable to bear him an heir. He later had a son with his new wife, Marie Louise, daughter of the Emperor of Austria. Perhaps Josephine's infertility stemmed from the fact that she was more than 40 years old, six years older than Napoleon, when her husband became emperor.

After her divorce from Napoleon, Josephine lived a quiet life at Malmaison, outside Paris. Napoleon continued to visit her until her death in 1814. Her daughter, Hortense, married Napoleon's brother, Louis, who was named King of Holland after Napoleon created the kingdom for him. Their son, also named Louis, became Emperor of France as Napoleon III in 1852.

Getting to Martinique

Arriving By Air

Air France flies nonstop from Miami to Martinique twice a week. In addition, **American Eagle Airlines** offers daily turboprop service from San Juan, Puerto Rico. Various carriers provide jet service to San Juan from gateway cities in North America.

Within the Caribbean, **Air Caraïbes** connects Fort-de-France with nine other islands, including Domi-

nica, Guadeloupe and Saint Lucia. **LIAT** serves most of the Caribbean, offering regular flights from Martinique to the English-speaking islands of Saint Lucia, Dominica, Antigua, Barbados and Trinidad.

TIP

If you plan to do some island-hopping, ask LIAT about the possibility of free stopovers on islands where the airplane makes intermediary landings.

Travelers from Europe can fly to Fort-de-France from Paris on either **Air France**, which offers daily B-747 service, or **AOM French Airlines**, which offers daily DC10 service.

AIRLINE INFORMATION	
International & Inter-island Carriers	
Air France	☎ 55-33-33; in the US, 800-237-2747
American Eagle	☎ 42-19-19 or 800-433-7300
AOM French Airlines	☎ 59-05-60
Air Caraïbes	☎ 51-08-09
BWIA	In the US, ☎ 800-538-2942
LIAT	☎ 42-16-02; in the US, 800-253-5011

The area code for Martinique is 596. When calling from the US, dial 011 + 596 (area code) + 596 (local exchange) + the six-digit number.

Aéroport International du Lamentin (☎ 42-16-00; arrival and departure information, ☎ 42-19-95) is a modern facility located on the west coast about midway between the capital city of Fort-de-France and the main tourist area around Trois-Ilets. The well-equipped lobby has information booths, restaurants, car rental offices and various shops. Phone cards and currency exchange are available at Change Caraïbes from 8am until 7pm daily. ☎ 42-17-11.

There is no departure tax.

Arriving By Sea

Ferry Service

Ferry service is available to Fort-de-France from Guadeloupe, Dominica, Les Saintes and Saint Lucia on 300-seat catamarans operated by **L'Express des Iles** (☎ 63-12-11; fax 63-34-47). **Brudey Frères** (☎ 70-08-50) runs 350-seat catamarans between Fort-de-France and Guadeloupe, with stops in Dominica. Expect the one-way fare to run between $55 and $95, depending on the distance of the trip.

Cruise Ships

Cruise ships dock at **Pointe Simon** on the west side of the harbor in Fort-de-France. Passengers have a short walk from the dock to the tourist information office and the center of town. Taxis and tour operators meet ships to take visitors to the beaches, shops and major sights on the island.

Private Boats

Several charter companies rent boats at the Marin & Pointe du Bout marinas.

Visitors who arrive by private boat may dock at **Pointe Simon** in Fort-de-France or in the towns of **Saint-Pierre** or **Marin**.

Getting Around

Car Rentals

Martinique has an excellent road system, with divided four-lane highways in the heavy traffic areas around Fort-de-France and two-lane highways extending to most areas of the island.

A valid license from your home state/province makes you legal behind the wheel on Martinique. Visitors from Europe are advised to get an international driver's license. The speed limit is 110 kmh/66 mph on multi-lane highways, and 80 kmh/48 mph on two-lane highways.

You may be challenged by the narrow roads that wind around mountains and the dirt stretches that lead to isolated spots.

Driving is on the right, as in America.

Roundabouts

Traffic circles frequently take the place of intersections on main roads. Cars already on the roundabout have the right of way, and you must yield to them. At an intersection, the car on the right always has the right of way.

Rates

The best rates are usually offered on weekly rentals reserved in advance from an internationally known agency, such as Avis or Hertz.

TIP

Check before you leave home about your insurance coverage outside the States. If you can decline insurance from the rental company, your rates will be lower.

You must be at least 21 years old to rent a car. Many agencies require that you be 25.

Local agencies advertise appealing rates, and some of the best are listed below. If you choose to call them from home or check with them after you reach Martinique, be certain you ask about additional charges. Remember, if you have a misunderstanding, it could turn into a long-distance hassle – in French.

The area code for Martinique is 596. When calling from the US, dial 011 + 596 (area code) + 596 (local exchange) + the six-digit number.

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES	
North American Companies	
Avis	☎ 800-331-1084; local 42-11-00; fax 51-50-84; www.avis.com
Budget	☎ 800-527-0700; local 42-16-79; fax 51-36-48; www.budget.antilles.com
Hertz	☎ 800-654-3001; local 42-16-90; fax 51-46-26; www.hertz.com
Local Companies	
Europcar	☎ 42-42-42; fax 42-42-44; www.autolocation
Eurodom	☎ 42-17-05 (airport); 60-10-93 (Fort-de-France)
Eurorent	☎ 60-43-62; fax 70-51-11
Jumbo Car	☎ 42-22-22; fax 42-22-32 (central reservations); 42-16-99 (airport)
Pop's Car	☎ 42-16-84; fax 42-16-85 (airport)
Rent A Car	☎ 51-32-32

Buses

Martinique doesn't have an island-wide bus system, but their ***taxis collectifs*** provide transportation to every town on the island. These minivans leave

Pointe Simon on the waterfront in Fort-de-France and pick up additional passengers when they are flagged down along their routes to outlying villages. Theoretically, you can get around the island quite well on this system. In reality, they are often full (especially during rush hour), they stop running at 6 o'clock each evening, and they don't follow a reliable schedule.

Many people resort to hitchhiking, but it is not recommended.

Taxis

Taxis are expensive, but for short trips, they are ideal. You can find them easily at the airport, cruise ship terminals and most major hotels. All are equipped with meters and drivers are allowed to charge 40% more for trips between 8pm and 6am, and on Sundays.

TAXI COMPANIES	
Radio Taxi	☎ 63-10-10
Martinique Taxi	☎ 63-63-62
Taxi Aéroport	☎ 42-16-66

Ferries

Regular boat service is provided between Fort-de-France and the resort areas across the bay around Trois-Islets. These ferries, called ***vedettes***, dock at La Savane, the large waterfront park in the capital city, eliminating the need to find parking space in town. The trip is short – about 20 minutes – and boats make frequent round-trips between the capital and Pointe du Bout, l'Anse Mitan and l'Anse à l'Ane. Approximate fares are 30FF/5€/$4 round-trip for adults and 15FF/2.5€/$2 round-trip for children.

All prices are approximate.

FERRY INFORMATION	
Get information and schedules at the dock, your hotel, or by calling the following companies.	
Vedettes Somatour ☎ 73-05-53	Service between Fort-de-France and Pointe du Bout.
Vedettes Madinina ☎ 63-06-46	Service between Fort-de-France and l'Anse Mitan and l'Anse à l'Ane.
Matinik ☎ 68-39-19	Service between Fort-de-France and Trois-Islets.

Festivals, Events & Holidays

The celebration is usually held on the weekend following the actual saint's day.

Martinique is divided into 34 *communes* and each one celebrates its patron saint's day with street parties, music competitions, and sports events. With so many festivals, you're sure to be on the island during some special event. You can get a list of upcoming events from the tourist office or by contacting the **Martinique Promotion Bureau** in New York. ☎ 212-838-7800; fax 212-838-7855; www.martinique.org.

Major Annual Events

Carnival – Sunday through Wednesday of the week beginning Lent.

Fort-de-France Festival – Celebrates Martinique's diverse cultures with music, plays and variety shows for two weeks in July.

Aqua Festival – Held in April, this event celebrates the grandeur of the sea. It features parades along the magnificient waterfront in the town of Robert.

Saint-Pierre Festival – Commemorates eruption of Pelée each May.

Carnival

Carnival takes place over a five-day period leading up to Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent. Parades take over the streets, bands march and elaborate floats compete for prizes. Revelers dress in costume each day, and on *Mardi Gras,* Fat Tuesday, everyone appears as a red devil. Then, on Ash Wednesday, the theme is black-and-white for the funeral of His Majesty Vaval, an enormous papier-mâché character.

Public & Religious Holidays

Banks and most businesses close on these public holidays:

January 1 . . . . . New Year's Day
May 1 . . . . . Labor Day
May 8 . . . . . Armistice Day (WWII)
May 22. . . . . Slavery Abolition Day
July 14. . . . . Bastille Day
August 15 . . . . . Assumption Day
November 1. . . . . All Saints' Day
November 2 . . . . . All Souls' Day
November 11 . . . . . Armistice Day (WWI)
December 25 . . . . . Christmas Day

Variable religious holidays are also observed by public closings:

Lundi Gras . . . . . Monday before AshWednesday
Mardi Gras . . . . . Shrove Tuesday (before Ash Wednesday)

Ash Wednesday . . . . . variable
Good Friday . . . . . variable
Easter Sunday and Monday . . . . . variable
Pentecost . . . . . closings on the 7th Sunday and Monday after Easter

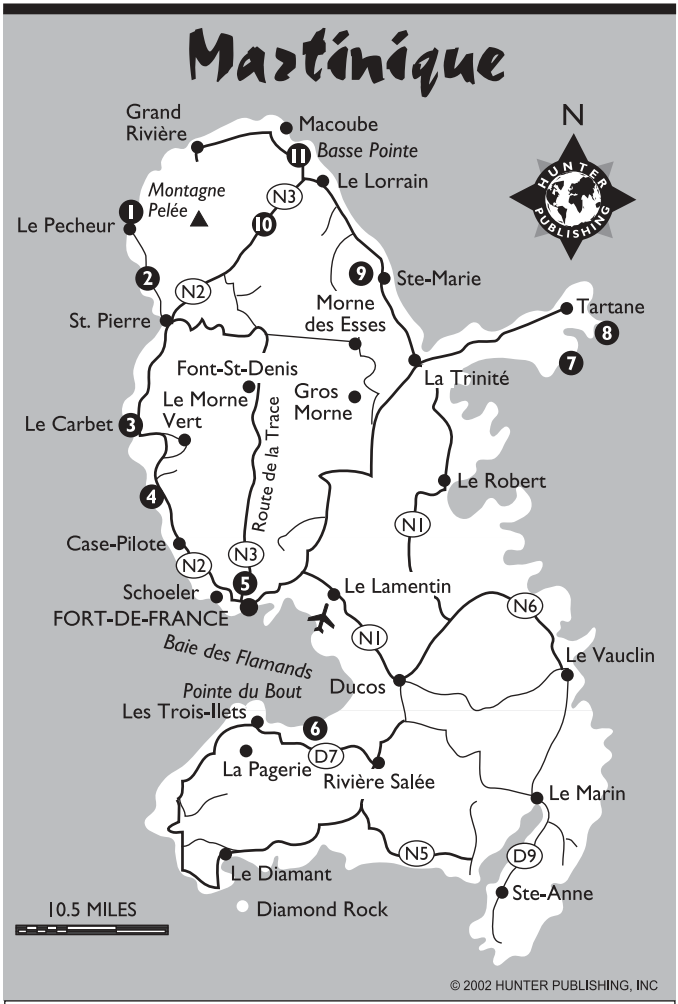
Exploring the Island

Fort-de-France

Fort-de-France is unlike any other capital city in the Caribbean. The latest fashions from Paris hang in store windows, baguettes poke out of shopping bags, business is conducted in pure mother-country French and menus posted in restaurant windows promise *haute cuisine*. Yet, this French package is wrapped in tropical colors and tied with a soft, spice-scented Créole cord.

Place de la Savane

Most of the activity centers around Place de la Savane, the central park of Fort-de-France and the ideal starting point for a city tour. The 12.5-acre flower-filled square is located across Boulevard Alfassa from the ferry docks at the far end of **Baie des Flamands**. The park has become a bit rundown recently and disreputable groups hang out there at night. Nevertheless, it is a perfectly safe and pleasant place to visit during the day. Looking back at the city from a bench under one of the royal palm trees, you will be struck by the contradiction of tropical beauty and urban frenzy.



1. Habitation Céron
2. Tombeau des Caraibes
3. Musée Gauguin/Valley of the Butterflies
4. Panorama Verrier
5. Eglise de Balata
6. Le Village de la Potterie
7. Reserve Naturelle de la Caravelle
8. Chateau Dubuc
9. Habitation Fond Saint-Jacques
10. Les Ombrages/Gorges de la Falaise
11. Leyritz Plantation

La Savane is surrounded by congested roads and sidewalk vendors, but the park itself is an oasis of green calm. On the north side, a beheaded white-marble **statue of Empress Josephine** stands holding a locket or medal that reveals a likeness of Napoleon Bonaparte. Unknown islanders decapitated the statue in 1991 during a display of scorn for the former French empress who was born on Martinique. It is thought that radicals were protesting either the island's dependence on France or Josephine's legendary role in prolonging slavery on the island to benefit her family plantation. Either way, the statue hasn't been repaired, which sends a clearer message than the vandalism itself.

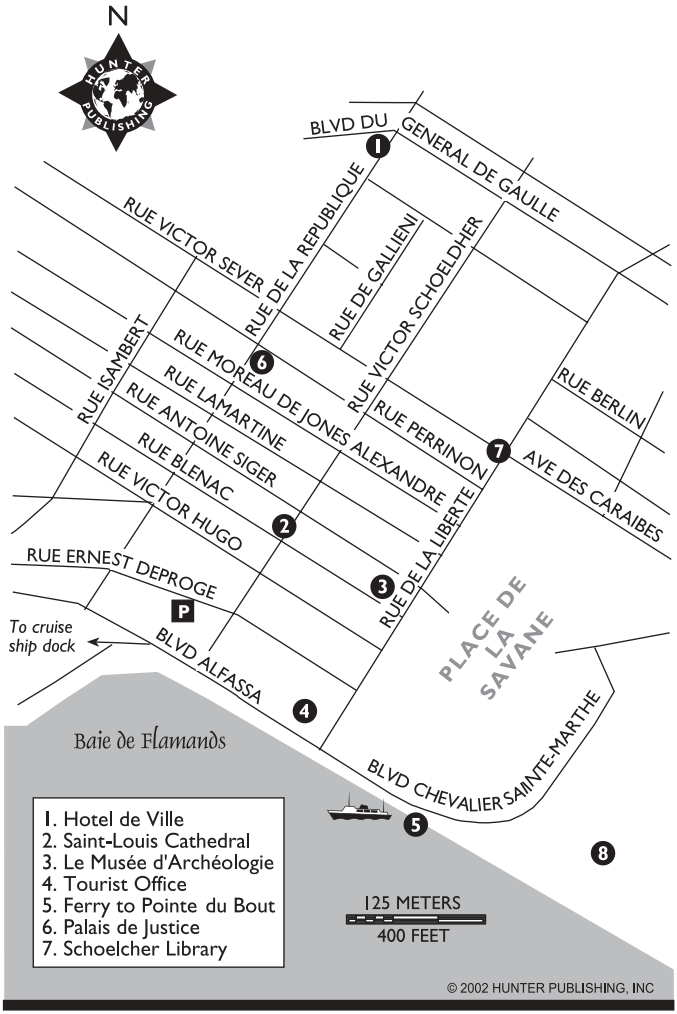
Restrooms, telephones, taxis, and parking are on Rue de la Liberté on the north side of La Savane. The Office of Tourism is a block north on Blvd. Alfassa, near the Air France office.

On the northwest corner of the park an **open-air market** sells T-shirts, batik clothing, swimsuits and handmade crafts. Nearby, you'll see a statue of Martinique's French founder, **Pierre Bélain d'Esnambuc**. Follow the walkway deeper into the park to find the **Monument aux Morts** that honors islanders who fought for France in both World Wars.

Fort Saint-Louis

South of La Savane, across Boulevard Chevalier Sainte-Marthe, Fort Saint-Louis stands on the waterfront where Fort Royal was built to defend the first settlers in 1638. The military still uses the fort, but you can take a 45-minute guided tour Tuesdays through Saturdays at 10, 11, noon, 2 and 3. Tickets cost 25FF/4€/$3 and the tour is in French, but it is worth the cost of admission to see inside the impressive fortress. ☎ 60-54-59.

Fort-de-France



WARNING

Visitors should beware of low archways intended to frustrate English invaders.

Schoelcher Library

Note the ironwork in the library.

Walk back across La Savane to the northeast corner. At the intersection of Rue de la Liberté and Avenue des Caraïbes is the magnificent **Bibliothèque Schoelcher**. This ornate domed building was designed by Henri Picq (Pick) and built in Paris at the same time as Gustave Eiffel's tower was being built for the 1889 World Fair.

Some say the charming mixed-style edifice was meant to house Martinique's exhibition at the fair. Others claim it was built to house 10,000 books donated to Martinique by French politician Victor Schoelcher who led the campaign to abolish slavery on the island. Either way, the structure was built in Paris and then dismantled and sent in pieces to Martinique in 1893.

Today, the reassembled library stands majestically as a tribute to freedom and education. You can visit the library, which is perhaps the most beautiful building in Fort-de-France, Tuesday through Thursday, 8am-5:30pm, Friday from 8:30am-5pm, Saturday, 8:30am-noon, and on Monday from 1-5:30pm. There's no entrance fee to gain access and wander among the 200,000 books as you enjoy the unique architecture. ☎ 70-26-67.

Archeological Museum

Back down Rue de la Liberté toward the waterfront, you'll see **Le Musée d'Archéologie**, which holds relics of the Arawak and Carib Indians. These tribes lived on Martinique and other Caribbean islands before Columbus discovered them. The museum itself is discouraging and signs are in French, but some of the displays are engrossing. The entrance fee is just 15FF/2.5€/$2, so take 15 or 20 minutes to see pre-Columbian pottery, maps and artifacts of daily life.

The archeological museum is open 9am-5pm, Mondays-Fridays, and 9am-noon on Saturdays. ☎ 71-57-05.

Cathédrale Saint-Louis

Another building designed by Henri Picq stands a block north on Rue Schoelcher. Look for the iron framework of the bell tower of La Cathédrale Saint-Louis looming over the center of town. The cathedral is awe-inspiring but simpler than Henri's library. It's difficult to say which is the more beautiful.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Built in 1895, this structure is actually the seventh at this location. Six before it suffered one disaster after another, and the town rebuilt on the same spot each time. The 1895 bell tower was damaged by earthquakes in 1946 and 1953, and the present structure was added in 1979.

The entire church was restored in 1982, but officials still deem the bell tower too unstable for visitors. However, you can visit the interior of the church to see the magnificent organ and stained-glass windows.

Sermac Floral Park

If you've had enough sightseeing, this is a good time to head out of town or do some shopping. However, if you still want to see more, continue walking east on Rue Schoelcher to Rue Moreau de Jonnes Alexandre. Turn left and pass the **Palais de Justice** on your right. A couple of blocks farther on, turn right on Rue de République, which will take you to the old **Hotel de Ville** (city hall) on Rue Victor Severe.

A large produce market is set up between the river and the floral park. Try one of the fresh coconut drinks.

When Rue Victor Severe reaches the river (Rivière Madame), you will be at the public fish market, which sits in front of the Parc Floral Sermac. This complex of buildings and gardens offers visitors a chance to stroll through displays of the islands flowers and geological structures. If you're not interested in paying the 5FF admission fee required to get into the galleries, just walk through the park (no charge) and take in the activity of the nearby markets.

Marketplace

See the "Shop Till You Drop" section for a roundup of the stores and shopping areas in Fort-de-France.

A covered market, back toward the waterfront between Rue Blenac and Rue Saint-Louis, is actually a large bazaar full of crafts, spices, flowers, beauty products and medicinal herbs. Islanders dressed in colorful outfits vie for your attention and extol the quality of their products. It's great fun.

To help you plan, the following tours emphasize don't-miss attractions in boldface type, and the best-of-the-best are marked with a star (☆).

Southwestern Tour

Fort-de-France to Diamant, Around the Peninsula

***HIGHLIGHTS**: La Pagerie Museum, the birthplace of Empress Josephine; the beach towns around Trois-Ilets; Diamond Rock.*

The peninsula that forms the southern curve of the Bay of Fort-de-France is Martinique's most popular tourist area. Beaches here are gorgeous strips of shaded sand that meet the gentle surf of the warm Caribbean. The northern shore is directly across the bay from the capital. Ferries provide convenient transportation for visitors who want to avoid city traffic.

Lamentin

From Fort-de-France, take Boulevard Général-de-Gaulle south to the national highway, N1, and follow the signs to N5 and the airport at Lamentin. The city of Lamentin is the second largest on Martinique, but most tourists pass through without stopping. Only the rum factory, **La Favorite**, is of much interest in this industrial area.

See the "Shop Till You Drop" section for information on La Galleria, located on the highway just outside of Lamentin.

Waiting for a flight? Stop at La Favorite for a free tour and rum tasting. It's open Monday-Friday, 9am-noon & 2-4pm. ☎ 50-47-32.

Ducos

Shortly after Lamentin, still on N5, you will come to the town of Ducos, where you can see another church,

Artists as well as those interested in architecture will be interested in the château's neoclassical lines.

Église Notre-Dame-de-la-Nativité. It was designed by Henri Picq, the architect of the grand cathedral and library in Fort-de-France. The nearby **Château Aubéry** (take N6 west, north of town) was designed by well-known Italian architects Volpi and Balesco for a wealthy plantation owner.

Trois-Ilets

Watch for the D7 exit off N5 shortly after Ducos. This will take you to **Trois-Ilets** (☆) and the stunning beaches along the southwest peninsula.

> ★ **DID YOU KNOW?**
>
> "Trois-Ilets" means three islands, and the village takes its name from three diminutive isles that float just offshore – Tébloux, Charles and Sixtain.

Surprisingly, the village has a rural quality that contrasts delightfully with its reputation as a tourist haven. A small market area abuts the shady square that serves as a centerpiece for an attractive town hall, school and church.

The district of Trois-Ilets was originally known as Cul-de-Sac-à-Vaches – dead end or barricade for cows – when it was settled in the late 1600s. The little island across the way was called l'Ilet-à-Vaches – cow island – and is now known as Gros-Ilet.

The **Eglise Notre-Dame-de-la-Délivrance** (☆) – Our Lady of Deliverance – sits on the square. It was built in 1724 and was the site of the marriage of Empress Josephine's parents and the baptism of the future empress herself on July 27, 1763. Inside the plain white building you can see the baptismal font and a repro-

duction of a painting, *The Assumption* by Murillo, that was given to the church by Josephine's grandson, Louis.

Louis went on to became Napoleon III.

While you're in the area, take the time to see the pottery village and sugarcane museum. The **Maison de la Canne** (cane house) is at Pointe Vatable, less than a mile east of town on D7, the road to Rivière-Salée. This old rum factory has been well restored and displays interesting memorabilia with signs in both French and English. By the time you leave, you will understand the significant influence sugar and rum have had on everything, including the island's art, music and literature.

TIP

One of the most interesting exhibits at Maison de la Canne is the *Code Noir*, or Black Code, which dictated proper conduct between slaves and whites.

Visit the museum Tuesdays through Sundays from 9am to 5pm. Admission is 15FF/2.5€/$2 for adults and 5FF/.85€/75¢ for children. ☎ 68-32-04.

Le Village de la Poterie, pottery village, is on a red dirt road off D7 about a half-mile past the sugar museum. This factory and workshop has been in business since the 18th century and is responsible for the red-clay bricks used on many of the homes and buildings in Trois-Ilets. In addition, the artisans make handsome decorative pieces from the red clay and offer them for sale at good prices in the village store. Visitors are welcome in the workrooms and store Monday through Saturday from 9am to 5pm and on Sunday from 9am until noon. ☎ 68-03-44.

Domaine de la Pagerie

West of Trois-Ilets, look for signs on D7 indicating a turn inland (away from the golf course) that leads to Domaine de la Pagerie (☆). The future Empress of France was born here in June 1763 and given the name Marie-Josèphe Rose Tascher de la Pagerie. She married Napoleon Bonaparte in 1796 and became Empress Josephine. (See page 44 for more details of her life.)

Today, you can visit the small stone house that was once the kitchen for the main residence and now holds a variety of Josephine's possessions, including furniture, pictures and letters from Napoleon. Ruins of the main house and sugar mill are still on the grounds of the estate that was called *Petite Guinée* (Little Guinea) during Josephine's lifetime.

La Pagerie is closed on Mondays.

Open Tuesday through Friday, 9am-5:30pm and Saturday and Sunday, 9am-1pm and 2:30-5:30pm. Admission to the museum is 20FF/3.33€/$3. ☎ 68-38-34.

Botanical Garden

Le Parc Naturel des Floralies, a small botanical garden, sits midway up the road that leads to Domaine de la Pagerie. The charge of 15FF/2.5€/$2 for adults and 6FF/1€/85¢ for children seems excessive, but the center was built in 1979 to host an international flower show at a cost of 2.5 million francs, so perhaps the fee is justified. On the grounds you'll find more than 100 types of labeled flowers and trees laid out in beautiful gardens, a little lake, an aquarium, a delightful open-air theater and a small aviary housing six species of indigenous birds.

Bring a picnic and enjoy it in the shade of huge mahogany trees.

Hours can be erratic, especially during low tourist season, but usually the grounds are open Monday through Friday from 8:30am-5pm and Saturday and Sunday from 9:30am-1pm. ☎ 68-34-50 or 64-42-59.

See the sections on beaches and hiking in "Sunup to Sundown" for information on the region between Trois-Ilets and Le Diamant.

Pointe du Bout

A finger of land west of Trois-Ilets juts out into the bay and points directly at Fort-de-France. This area is the indisputable tourist capital of Martinique. Pointe du Bout (☆) and the nearby beaches are the center for large resorts, gourmet restaurants and high-fashion boutiques. Yachts flank the marina and ferries deliver passengers who come to try their luck in the casino or enjoy quality entertainment at the nightclubs.

If you're driving, reach the tourist area by taking D38 off D7. Traffic can get heavy at the 'Y' intersection south of the marina, so you may want to park prior to that point and walk the rest of the way.

Le Diamant

The drive from Trois-Islets to Grande Anse on D7 is rated one of the most picturesque on the island. South of Grande Anse, the road splits and you have the choice of continuing on D7 or hugging the coast on D37. Both are lovely routes, and both take you to Le Diamant (☆). If you choose to follow the coastal road, you will have magnificent views of Diamond Rock after you pass Petite Anse and round the point below Morne Larcher.

The town of Diamant is quite charming, but the beach and the giant multifaceted rock that lies offshore attract most of the attention. **Rocher du Diamant** (☆), Diamond Rock, is a 600-foot hunk of limestone about three miles out from the coast. It's an interesting

sight, but its bizarre history makes it especially intriguing.

HMS Diamond Rock

In 1804, during the Napoleonic wars, the British Navy landed more than 100 sailors on the rock. They fortified it with cannons and registered it as a warship named the HMS *Diamond Rock*. From this unsinkable "vessel" the English patrolled and controlled all oceangoing traffic in the area and managed to enforce a blockade on Martinique for 17 months. Finally, the French launched a full-scale attack – which was begun by floating several barrels of rum to the marooned enemy. After the Brits drank themselves into a stupor, the French drove them from their stronghold and retook the rock. The English sailors fled to Barbados, where they were punished for deserting their ship. Today, when a British ship passes Diamond Rock, the crew stands at attention and salutes.

North Caribbean Coast Tour

Around the Northern Coast, from Fort-de-France to Le Prêcheur

HIGHLIGHTS: Valley of the Butterflies*, set in a botanical garden among 17th-century ruins;* ***Musée Gauguin****, a small display about the artist's time on Martinique;* ***Saint-Pierre****, the city destroyed by Mont Pelée;* ***Habitation Céron****, an historic plantation and well-preserved model of daily life in the pro-slavery era.*

Schoelcher

Saint-Pierre is on every tourist's itinerary – and rightly so – but Martinique's northern coast has numerous interesting sites that can be visited in a day. Start in Schoelcher, a residential suburb north of Fort-de-France. Notice the dramatic **statue of Victor Schoelcher**, for whom the town was named, on the square in front of the Palace of Justice. It shows the Frenchman breaking a slave's chains and declaring that slavery will never again endure on French ground.

Case-Pilote

Take N2 to Case-Pilote, among the oldest villages on the island, where you should drive by **Notre-Dame-de-l'Assomption** (turn toward the water at the gas station), one of Martinique's oldest churches. It's considered an important historical monument. If you're intrigued by architecture, the stone façade and Baroque style will be of interest.

The pleasant town square, close to the church, is a good spot to relax. It has a quaint town hall.

Don't miss the view from **Panorama Verrier** (☆) above the fishing village of Bellefontaine. It's not easy to find or reach, but is well worth the trouble. One route is a narrow, steep road from the center of town – a right turn before you reach D20. The viewpoint is three miles ahead on the left. An alternate route is off D63 before you enter Bellefontaine. About 300 feet after you turn right on D63, take a left where a partially hidden sign points the way to Verrier. Three miles farther, on a brutally bumpy road, you will be rewarded by a fabulous panoramic view of the Caribbean and Mont Pelée.

Watch for the colorful boats, or gommiers, *pulled up on shore in the fishing villages.*

Morne-Vert

Another great detour with a fabulous view is the town of Morne-Vert (☆). Take D20 off N2 just before the town of Carbet. The town, which is called *la petite Suisse* or little Switzerland, sits about 1,400 feet up, on the way to the Pitons du Carbet. (See *Hiking* in the *Sunup to Sundown* section, pages 105, 108.)

You'll be surprised by the cool, dry, refreshing air up here – and awed by the abundance of thick, green foliage growing on the mountain. It's a peaceful spot, and you can wander about the countryside or the little village church and cemetery without swatting insects or breaking a sweat.

Le Carbet

Le Carbet (☆) deserves a visit for several reasons, depending on your interests. Historians think Columbus landed here on the gray-sand beach on June 15, 1502 (see *Beaches* in the *Sunup to Sundown* section, page 88). Remember that he was hesitant to set foot on the island at all because of reports of Amazon women and fierce, flesh-eating savages. More than a hundred years later, Pierre Bélain d'Esnambuc arrived here from France to set up the first colony. Then, in 1887, Paul Gauguin set up a studio in the village and painted what are now known as scenes from his Antilles period.

The small but interesting **Musée Paul Gauguin** (☆) is north of town, across from Turin Beach. It displays random memorabilia related to the artist's time on Martinique. Unfortunately, none of his original paintings is shown, but there are several reproductions. One of the most interesting exhibits is a collection of

letters to his wife, whom he abandoned along with his five kids, where he whines about his own poor health and the ills of civilization. Admission is 15FF/2.5€/$2, and the museum is open every day, 9am-5:30pm. ☎ 78-22-66 or 72-52-49.

The museum also houses a well-organized collection of traditional Créole costumes & works by local artists.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

The picturesque tunnel through which you pass as you travel north from Corbet to Saint-Pierre was cut through the mountain in 1854. The view coming out is beautiful.

Saint-Pierre

In Saint-Pierre (☆), climb aboard the ***Cyparis Express*** mini-train for an hour-long tour of the martyred city (see page 41 for the full story). Narration is in French.

TIP

If you don't speak French, buy a photo book with English translations at one of the shops or museums before you take the tour.

Even without a book, you'll be fascinated by the ruins of the church, theater, port and jail cell where Cyparis, the only survivor, was held prisoner during the eruption. Afterwards, you can wander about on your own to areas that are most interesting.

The ***Cyparis Express*** runs Mondays through Fridays, 10am-1pm and 2:30-5pm. Tickets are 50FF/

8€/$7 for adults and 25FF/4€/$3 for children. The departure station is at Place des Ruines du Figuier near the ruins of little buildings that were stores and warehouses before the eruption. ☎ 55-50-92 or 78-31-41.

After your train ride, begin your walking tour of Saint-Pierre at the **Musée Vulcanologique**, volcano museum, to get an idea what the city was like before and after the vast devastation that took place on May 8, 1902. You'll see petrified food; glass objects fused together by melting heat; deformed household items; and old photographs of the city when it was known as "Little Paris of the West Indies."

Musée Vulcanologique was founded by American scientist Franck A Perret in 1932. It's near the tourist information office on Rue Victor Hugo and open daily from 9am-5pm. Admission is 10FF/1.66€/$1.50. ☎ 78-15-16.

Now take a walk among the ruins and through the new town that's been built up around them – sometimes using the old walls in new construction. Don't miss the **Ancien Théatre** (☆), or Old Theater, diagonally across the street from the museum. The double staircase, lobby, stage and several walls survived the eruption and give an idea of the grandeur that once existed. The theater was built in 1786 as a small-scale version of a magnificent theater in Bordeaux and could seat 800 people on three levels. The statue at the top of the stairs is one you may recognize. Called *Saint-Pierre Rising from Its Ashes*, it depicts a bare-breasted nymph with flowing hair pushing herself halfway up from a face-down, prone position. Step back and look at it from the side with innocent-looking Mont Pelée in the background.

At the side of the theater, you'll find the famous **jail cell** (☆). It's easy to see how Cyparis was saved by the thick walls that were built in 1660.

Farther north on Rue Victor Hugo, you'll cross the **Pont de la Roxelane** (☆), a stone bridge built over the river in 1766. Straight ahead are the ruins of the Quartier du Fort. Turn right on the road that runs along the river and you will come to **monte au ciel**, the stairway to heaven. This steep roadway stairsteps up the hill with a stone gutter running down the center.

The history museum, **Le Musée Historique**, on Rue Victor Hugo, south of the theater ruins, is an interesting stop. It offers more details on Saint-Pierre before and after the eruption. Admission is 12FF/2€/$1.70. It's open daily, 9:30am-5:30pm, except Sunday, when it closes at 1pm.

Go back toward the waterfront and turn north on Rue des Chiens, which leads to **Eglise du Fort** (☆). The grassed-over remains of the stone church that was built to replace the original wooden structure in 1660 are dramatic. Many parishioners were in the church celebrating the mass of Ascension Day when the eruption occurred.

Views of St-Pierre from the estate are wonderful.

Leave the church and follow Rue Schoelcher until it becomes Allée Pécoul and ends at **Château Depaz** (☆) on the Pécoul plantations. This is one of the oldest homes on the island and was rebuilt by Victor Depaz after the eruption in 1902. At the time of the disaster, Depaz was studying in France and was the only member of his family to survive. You can visit the estate, which is also a rum distillery, Mondays through Fridays, 9am-5pm, and Saturdays from 9am-1pm. Admission is free. ☎ 78-13-14.

Sunken Treasures

Check out the "Sunup to Sundown" section for information on dive centers and boat rentals.

Before you leave town, walk along the beach and seafront area. If you're a certified diver, don't miss the chance to explore the ships that sank in port. Saint-Pierre was one of the most important anchorages in all the Antilles, so about 40 boats were docked there when a tidal wave caused by the eruption sent all but one to the bottom of the sea. You may also wish to rent a boat for a tour of the coast and fantastic views of Mont Pelée.

Chest of the Dead

When you leave Saint-Pierre, take the scenic drive along the coast on D10. About three miles from town, you come to cliffs known as **Tombeau des Caraïbes** (Carib Tomb), or **Le Coffre à Morts** (Chest of the Dead). Legend says that a band of Caribs who were stalked and hassled into submission by French colonists threw themselves off the cliffs to avoid being captured or suffering a shameful defeat.

Habitation Céron

Drive through the town of **Le Prêcheur**, which is named for the lava formation that resembles a preacher. Then, head farther north past spectacular black-sand beaches to Habitation Céron (☆). In 1658, the plantation was a large sugar factory run by a hydraulic wheel. It was owned by Leroux Chapelle de Sainte Croix, captain of the Prêcheur militia. Today, it is a well-preserved and interesting tour through history.

From the parking lot, you pass through an area of old slave shacks that are now used as a restaurant, boutique and ticket office. You can then actually walk through the various levels of sugarcane production by visiting the mill, the juice conveyor, a 17th-century furnace that provided heat for the boiling room, and the curing house. A crayfish farm and abundant gardens now produce fresh goods for the riverside restaurant, and the estate grounds are home to numerous birds, colorful lizards and a rare, beautiful, harmless spider called *matoutou*. Admission is 35FF/5.83€/$5 for adults and 15FF/2.5€/$2 for children. You may visit any day, 9:30am-5pm. ☎ 52-94-53; fax 52-96-02.

Route de la Trace

From Fort-de-France to Grand Rivière

HIGHLIGHTS: *The* ***Eglise de Balata****, a church styled after the Sacre-Coeur in Paris;* ***Jardin de Balata****, a botanical garden;* ***Gorges de la Falaise****, a waterfall; the* ***Leyritz Plantation****;* ***Museum of Dolls*** *(made from plants).*

The **Route de la Trace** (trail route) is a scenic drive through the interior rain forest from Fort-de-France to the Atlantic coast. It is called the trail route because it follows a twisting path cut through the vegetation by Jesuit priests in the 1700s. If you can't make it to Dominica's wild and wonderful forest, this is the next best thing.

Balata

Pick up N3 and head through the hills north of the capital toward the town of Balata. After driving about

four miles, you'll see the **Eglise de Balata** (☆), a very close copy of the famous Basilica of Sacre-Coeur, Blessed Heart Cathedral, on Montmartre in Paris. The view back toward Fort-de-France is as interesting as the domed church, whose main draw is its familiar image in a foreign location.

As you head north again, look for **Halte Panoramique**, where you can have a drink and see the glorious views of the Pitons du Carbet, the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. The viewing area is on the estate of Habitation La Liot and admission is 30FF/5€/$4, which includes a drink. It's open daily, 8:30am-4:30pm. ☎ 64-64-90.

Jardin Balata was designed & created over a 20-year period by Jean-Philippe Thoze, whose grandmother owned the estate.

An abundance of rain makes **Jardin Balata** (☆) a lush, green wonderland. It's not large, but allow at least an hour to stroll slowly through the tropical gardens surrounding a pretty Créole house furnished with interesting antiques.

All signs are in French, but it doesn't matter – you're here to enjoy the relaxed beauty. The gardens are open every day, 9am-5pm, and admission is 40FF/6.65€/$5.65 for adults, 15FF/2.5€/$2 for children. ☎ 64-48-73.

TIP

Bring your camera to take pictures of flowers, hummingbirds, lizards and the Pitons du Carbet in the distance.

Saint-Denis

The drive north of the garden follows N3 into the mountains to an elevation of almost 2,000 feet. Then you wind back down to an outstanding gorge cut by

the Rivière Blanche. Stop for a rest or short walk into the forest at **Site de l'Alma**. About 2½ miles farther on, you will come to a place called Deux-Choux (two cabbages), and a chance to take a great detour. Turn west on D1 toward **Fond-Saint-Denis** (☆). You'll go through a tunnel, then see a sign at the side of the road indicating the Jesuits Trail. (See *Hiking* in the *Sunup to Sundown* section.)

Residents in St-Denis compete with their neighbors in Ajoupa-Bouillon for recognition as the town with the most flowers.

As you enter Fond-Saint-Denis you will be overwhelmed by flowers. The village itself is small and not particularly notable, except for the flowers. They are everywhere.

Cruise through the charming village and notice the church and its cemetery that stand on a hill surrounded by flowers. Allow enough time to visit the observatory, **Observatoire du Morne des Cadets**, which is signed to the south off D1. Here, you can take in the view of Mont Pelée and the Pitons. Then turn back to the Route de la Trace and continue north to Morne Rouge, the red hill.

A Gardener's Treat

Gardeners will want to stop at **Jardin MacIntosh** to see the gardens, nursery and gift shop. It's a steep, three-mile drive from Morne Rouge. Open Monday-Friday, 9am-4:30pm, and on Saturday from 9am-1pm. Admission is 25FF/4.16€/$3.50 for adults, 10FF/1.66€/$1.40 for children. ☎ 52-34-21.

Morne Rouge

The village of Morne Rouge (☆) is on a 1,500-foot *morne* near the slopes of Mont Pelée. It was destroyed

by another eruption months after the catastrophe at Saint-Pierre, and the church is an important site for Catholics. Each year, on August 30 (the date on which 1,500 people were killed by the volcano's eruption in 1902), islanders make a pilgrimage to the church to pay homage to the Virgin Mary while kneeling before a beautiful statue that was made in Normandy, France, *Notre Dame de la Délivrance.*

TIP

If you haven't had a volcano overload, stop in the museum, **Maison du Volcan**. It's open Tuesday through Thursday, 9am-noon and 2-4pm, and Friday through Sunday, 9am-noon. Admission is 15FF/2.5€/$2. ☎ 52-45-45.

Ajoupa-Bouillon

Now it's time to vote for the town with the most flowers. You've seen gorgeous Fond-Saint-Denis – now you will enter Ajoupa-Bouillon. The flowers, of course, are magnificent, and you'll want to drive around the village and perhaps stop at the little Baroque church, Eglise de l'Immaculée-Conception. However, the natural sites demand the most attention.

Gorges de la Falaise (☆) is a park about a mile outside of the village in the direction of Saint-Pierre. It has a trail leading to a terrific waterfall.

TIP

If you want to hike to the gorge, wear a swimsuit or clothes you don't mind getting wet. The park supplies waterproof containers for cameras and you can rent non-skid river shoes.

Admission into the park is 20FF/3.33€/$2.85 for adults, 15FF/2.5€ for children, and 35FF/5.8€/$5 for guided tours. ☎ 52-52-42 or 53-37-56.

WARNING

Part of the hike goes through deep water, so tackle those sections only if you're a confident swimmer.

Another natural site worth visiting is **Les Ombrages** (☆), north of Ajoupa-Bouillon on the east side of N3. Here, a trail leads through wild, thick, jungle-like foliage along a gorge, then opens out into a nice botanical garden. Farther along the trail, you will come to the ruins of an old sugar mill and rum distillery. The botanical garden is open daily, 9am-5pm, and admission is 20FF/3.33€/$$2.80 for adults and 10FF/1.66€/$1.40 for children. ☎ 53-31-90 or 53-32-87.

Signs advertising **La Maison de l'Ananas** (the pineapple house) are posted along the highway, so you'll have no trouble finding this attraction. Actually, you'll see sugarcane and bananas as well as pineapples growing in the rich volcanic soil when you take the 50FF/8.33€/$7 tour in a 4x4 vehicle. The commentary is French, but you may enjoy the ride and learn something from seeing the plantation up-close. You'll

certainly enjoy the tasting afterward. ☎ 53-39-18 or 53-30-02.

Basse-Pointe

Shortly before you reach the coast, N3 intersects with N1, which runs along the Atlantic side of Martinique. Turn left onto N1 and go north toward Basse-Pointe, the village where Aimé Césaire was born.

Aimé Césaire

As longtime mayor of Fort-de-France and a renowned poet-playwright, Aimé Césaire has been a powerful influence in the crusade to build cultural identity among blacks.

Born in Basse-Pointe, Martinique on June 26, 1913 to a large, impoverished family, Aimé studied in Paris after excelling as a student at the high school in Fort-de-France. He was one of three founders of Negritude, a movement that encouraged blacks to reject assimilation and promote their racial qualities and heritage.

His early poems were noted for strong African imagery and rejection of French oppressors, and he engaged in political actions supporting the decolonization of French colonies.

In 1945 Aimé became mayor of Fort-de-France. He held several political offices, including *Député* and member of the French National Assembly. In 1957 he founded the Progressive Party on Martinique. Between 1945 and 1993, while holding continuous political office, he wrote more than 14 literary works and appeared in more than 64 international publications.

Stop at **Plantation de Leyritz** (☆), the 18th-century estate where US President Gerald Ford met with British Prime Minister James Callaghan, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing in 1976. The plantation is now a hotel and restaurant as well as a major tourist attraction.

Visitors tour the unrestored manor house with its original furniture, the rum distillery and the sugar mill, which has a preserved paddlewheel. The best part, however, is strolling around the attractive park-like grounds. Be sure to visit the doll museum, **Musée des Poupées Végétales**, which is inside the gift shop. Here, artisan Will Fenton displays his craft of fashioning Victorian-style dolls from dried plants.

If you are not staying or eating at Leyritz Plantation, there is an admission charge of 15FF/2.5€/$2 for adults and 5FF/.83€/70¢ for children. The grounds are open daily, 8am-6:30pm. ☎ 78-53-92.

There's really no need to stop in the towns of Basse-Pointe and Macouba (see *Route de Rhum* for information on the rum distillery at Macouba) on your way to Grand Rivière, except for the spectacular views. If you do go on to the end of the road, notice the fishermen's houses on the cliffs directly above the sea in Grand Rivière.

Catching a Ride

It's possible to get a boat ride around the northern coast with one of the fishermen by either asking at the tourist office in town, or going to the beach at the end of the road and asking the fishermen directly. Expect to pay about 70FF/12€/$10 per person.

Grand Rivière

The beach at Grand Rivière is popular with surfers, but the waves are usually too strong for swimming. A 10-mile **trail** beginning on the left just before the beach goes through the rain forest all the way to a beach near Le Prêcheur on the west coast. Since it takes about six hours to hike one way, you may want to go just a short distance to see the wonderful views. Another idea is to grab a ride on one of the fishermen's boats to a beach near the trail's end, then hike back to your car in Grand Rivière.

West Coast Tour

From Le Robert to Marigot

HIGHLIGHTS: *The bay of* ***Le Robert****; the* ***Caravelle Peninsula****;* ***Habitation Fond Saint-Jacques****;* ***Basket workshop and market****;* ***Sugar Loaf*** *above Marigot Bay.*

Le Robert

See "Sunup to Sundown," page 100, for a list of companies that arrange trips to these reefs and islands.

Le Robert (☆) is a large agricultural and fishing town with a spectacular bay known as **Havre du Robert** (☆). The cove, which is almost five miles long and three miles wide, is protected by a group of islands scattered offshore, and is considered among the most attractive in the Antilles. You can park and walk along a grassy area to observe the islands and boats in the harbor, but you actually get a better view coming in on highway N1 or from the hills above the town on D1 near the community of Vert-Pré.

Caravelle Peninsula

A short distance north, take highway D2 out to the Caravelle Peninsula (☆), a fabulous mix of cliffs and beaches that juts seven miles into the Atlantic. In French, a peninsula is called *presqu'île*, which means "almost an island." Indeed, the ragged piece of land looks like a small islet that accidently bumped up against Martinique and became attached. You can drive along D2 all the way to **Réserve Naturelle de la Caravelle** (☆), a natural reserve that covers the entire western end of the peninsula. It's criss-crossed with hiking trails, capped off with a lighthouse offering extraordinary views. This is the site of the former Dubuc family estate.

Park and walk into the park to the ruins of **Château Dubuc** (☆), a sugar plantation built around 1770 by the legendary Dubuc de Rivery family, who presumably acquired their wealth from smuggling slaves and looting ships that wrecked on their shore. It's interesting to meander around the grounds and ruins, which include the manor house, jail cells (supposedly used for holding slaves) and a mill. There's also a small museum that displays items found during archeological excavations. Supposedly, this is the ancestral home of Aimée Dubuc, who some say was kidnaped by pirates and sold to Turks as a slave. Later, she became a mistress to the Sultan of Constantinople and gave birth to Mahmud II, who became the powerful sultan of the Turkish Ottoman Empire.

The Dubuc estate is open Monday through Saturday from 8:30am-noon and 2:30-5:30pm, and on Sunday, 8:30am-noon. Admission is 15FF/2.5€/$2.

The busy town of **La Trinité**, on the north side of the peninsula, has outgrown its road system, and you will have traffic all along N1, which runs next to the attractive waterfront development. There's no reason to

stop, unless you need a break, so continue toward Sainte-Marie and watch for a turn west onto D25, which will take you to Morne des Esses.

Morne des Esses

Morne des Esses was once a hideout for escaped slaves and is now a strong center for native African and Caribbean culture. Stop at **La Paille Caraïbe** (☆), where you can watch skillful weavers at work making baskets, hats and other functional items.

> ★ **DID YOU KNOW?**
>
> The earthy colors of brown, black, ivory and rust found in the products are the result of using two types of straw, *cachibou* and *aroman*.

You can buy the superbly made crafts in the co-op store. Admission is free, and the workshop and store are open Monday through Friday, 8:30am-12:30pm and 1:30-5pm, and on Saturday from 8:30am-12:30pm. ☎ 69-83-74.

Sainte-Marie

Double back on D25 to Sainte-Marie, a large town full of activity, especially along the attractive waterfront. If the tide is out, you can actually walk to the little islet with the cross on top that sits out in the bay. Turn left (west) off N1 onto D24 to reach the **Musée du Rhum** (☆) at the Saint-James Distillery, and the **Musée de la Banane** (☆).

The Rum Museum offers an overview of rum production on Martinique from cultivating the sugarcane to

marketing the liquor. The museum is set in a lovely colonial house on the plantation next to the Saint-James Distillery, so the information given is slanted toward that company. But the process and history of rum making is essentially the same for all distilleries that produce pure cane-juice rum, so you'll come away well educated. Monday through Friday, 9am-5pm, and on Saturday and Sunday, 9am-1 pm. ☎ 69-30-02.

There is no fee for touring or sampling at the Rum Museum.

The **Banana Museum**, on the same road, is set on the working estate of Habitation Limbé. In this former master's house you'll find out everything you ever wanted to know about bananas. Then you tour the Créole workers' shacks to see all the products that can be made from the banana plant – dolls, hats, jam, desserts, perfume and soap. Afterward, you're free to stroll the 10-acre estate. Admission is 35FF/5.83€/$5, and the museum is open daily, 9am-5pm. ☎ 69-45-52.

To get to **Habitation Fond Saint-Jacques** (☆) turn left about a mile north on N1. Thanks to the University of Montreal in Canada, this is one of the best-preserved estates on the island. The original plantation was started by Dominican priests in about 1660. Some 30 years later, the renowned Père Jean-Baptiste Labat took control and made it the most advanced and profitable rum-producing enterprise.

Père Jean-Baptiste Labat invented a copper still, which improved the distillation process.

The Revival of Fond Saint-Jacques

After the French Revolution, Saint-Jacques came under government control and deteriorated. In 1968, the University of Montreal assumed responsibility for restoring the estate, and you can now visit the renovated stone chapel, kitchen and warehouses. Gardens have been planted around other ruins. Archeological excavations have uncovered interesting sites here, including what may be a large slave cemetery.

Admission to Habitation Fond Saint-Jacques is 15FF/2.5€/$2. It is open Monday through Saturday, 9am-5pm. ☎ 69-10-12.

Marigot

Marigot is a pretty, flower-filled town built around a bay where native Arawak tribes once lived. If you have time, drive up D15 to the lookout high on **Pain de Sucre** (Sugar Loaf), which is named for its similarity to the geological formation of the same name in Rio de Janeiro.

The Best Rum in the World

Rum made in Martinique and Guadeloupe has the worldwide reputation of being some of the best in the world for one reason – it's made from genuine sugarcane. The famous and undeniably delicious rums of Puerto Rico, Haiti and other Caribbean islands are distilled from molasses or other sugar residue.

A trip to Martinique isn't complete until you've visited a couple of *rhumeries* and tasted some truly fine rums. Eleven distilleries welcome visitors, give guided tours and offer samples of rums for sale. Most of the brands are not available in the US, and those that are, such as Clement and Saint James, are hard to find.

Rum is tightly woven into the history of Martinique. This *eau de vie* and its production is steeped in tradition and is a major part of the island's culture. More importantly, it plays an essential role in Martinique's future. Even if you don't care for the drink, its story is fascinating.

In 1996, Martinican rum was granted an A.O.C. (*Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée*), which elevated its

status and guaranteed that its production would be as strictly controlled as the great wines of France. This is a hard-won trophy awarded after centuries of toil.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Rumbullion is an English word that was commonly used in the 1600s to describe an intoxicated person. When West Indian sailors brewed up a rough-edged liquor from sugarcane to ease their long nights at sea, they called it *rum*. The quality of the drink improved over the years, but didn't actually catch on as a fine liquor until World War II, when French soldiers stationed on Martinique found it to their liking. Before long, rum's praises were equaling those of cognac.

Rum that is made from sugarcane is given the name ***rhum agricole***, while rum originating from molasses is called ***rhum industriel***. The king of rums is ***rhum vieux***, or aged rum, which ripens in oak barrels at least three years, and often up to 15 years. Martinique's climate helps to speed up the aging process, and rums emerge from their barrels with a rich amber color much sooner than in drier, cooler places.

White rum, ***rhum blanc agricole***, is not aged and has a stronger, rougher taste. Most people prefer to mix it with something else to make punch. Martinique and Guadeloupe are known for their ***ti-punch***, short for *petit punch*, which is made of a large shot of white rum cut with a little sugar syrup and a squeeze of fresh lime. The punch it delivers is not petite. Another popular drink is ***punch planteur***, which is a shot of white rum mixed with tropical fruit juices such as

pineapple and guava. Countless other drinks with imaginative names are concocted in every bar and restaurant on the island.

Other classifications of rum include ***rhum paile***, aged 18 months; ***rhum ambré***, aged three years; ***rhum vieux traditionnel***, aged five to seven years; ***rhum vieux hor d'âge***, aged eight to 12 years; and ***rhum vieux milléslimeé***, aged 15 years or more. Look for these terms on the bottle when you shop.

You'll want to visit at least one distillery while on Martinique. They are spread out around the island in every direction, so you should have no trouble fitting one or two into your touring itinerary. Each is different, of course, and some put on a more organized presentation than others. **Rhumerie Saint-James** has a museum that chronicles the history of sugarcane and rum production on the island, while **Distillerie Rhum Clément** is a beautifully restored plantation with a multimedia presentation. (Clément rum is now made in nearby Simon and aged at the showcase plantation outside Le François.) Even the smaller distilleries do a good job of introducing you to the process of rum making, and may allow you more time and freedom to wander about and sample the goods.

Distilleries to Visit

Bally – Habitation Lajus, Le Carbet, ☎ 78-08-94. Monday-Saturday, 8am-5pm. Entrance fee: 30FF/5€/$4.25 adults; 15FF/2.5€/$2 children.

Habitation Depaz, Saint-Pierre, ☎ 78-13-14. Monday-Friday, 8am-5pm; Saturday, 8am-1pm. Free tours and sampling.

Dillon, Mongérald, Fort-de-France, ☎ 75-20-20. Monday-Friday, 9am-4pm. Free tours and sampling.

Hardy, Caravelle Peninsula, ☎ 58-20-82. Daily, 8:30am-1pm and 2-7pm. Free tours and sampling.

JM Crassous De Medeuil, Macouba, ☎ 78-92-55. Monday-Saturday, 7am-noon and 1-4pm. Free tours and sampling.

La Mauny, Rivière Pilote, ☎ 62-62-08. Free guided tours scheduled with sampling: Monday-Friday at 10 and 11am, 12:30, 2, 3, and 4pm, and Saturday at 10 and 11am and noon.

Saint James, Sainte-Marie, ☎ 69-30-02 or 69-39-39. Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm; Saturday & Sunday, 9am-1pm.

Trois Rivières, Sainte-Luce, ☎ 62-51-78. Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm; Saturday, 9am-noon. Guided tours and sampling are available for a fee. Call for the exact cost.

Distillerie Rhum Clement, Domaine de l'Acajou, Le François, ☎ 54-62-07. Daily, 9am-6pm. Entrance fee: 35F/6€.

Distillerie Neisson, Le Carbet, ☎ 78-03-70. Free tours and sampling daily, 8am-3pm.

André Dormoy, Domaine de la Favorite, Lamentin, ☎ 50-47-32. Sunday-Thursday, 9am-4pm; Friday 9am-noon. Free tours and sampling.

TIP

When you visit the tasting rooms, you may want to buy and bring home the maximum amount legally allowed because most of these rums are not exported to the United States. US residents 21 and older may bring back one liter of alcohol duty-free; see page 34 for details.

Organized Tours

Cruise-ship passengers and visitors on a tight schedule can visit many of Martinique's best attractions in a single day. Numerous agencies offer guided tours in minivans and 4x4 vehicles.

TIP

Before you sign on for a day-long excursion, be sure that the guide speaks English, the vehicle has A/C, and that you feel comfortable with the group size. Nothing spoils the day faster than being crammed into a hot van and herded like French sheep.

Guides and tour operators meet passengers at the cruise ship terminals and often arrange tours at a lower rate than those offered by the cruise lines. Day-trippers will find guides at the ferry docks and airport. If you're staying on Martinique, your hotel or the tourist office can suggest guides to meet your expectations, or contact one of the agencies below to arrange for an English-speaking guide.

TOUR COMPANIES	
Adventures Tropicales	☎ 64-58-49; fax 64-18-76
Banana Tours	☎ 63-66-77; fax 71-28-38
Caribjet	☎ 51-90-00; fax 51-70-71
Caribtours	☎ 50-93-52; fax 50-48-49 E-mail prod@delahoussaye.com
Caribbean Spirit	☎ 27-04-01; fax 76-19-26
Evasion Tropicale	☎ 74-71-00; fax 62-37-11
Madinina Tours Tours for the disabled	☎ 70-65-25; fax 73-09-53
Jeep Adventure	☎ 62-32-05
L'Ile Verte	☎ 66-10-13

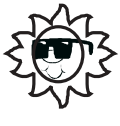
Sunup to Sundown

Since Martinique is a mix of cosmopolitan cities, rural fishing villages, remarkably beautiful beaches, and tropical rain forests, visitors will find plenty of activities to fill each day.

More than a hundred miles of marked trails wind through the island. The **Parc Naturel** (☆) protects much of the forest and offers fabulous hiking, including the popular **Trace des Jésuites** (☆). Those who prefer to drive will enjoy **La Route de la Trace** (☆), an excellent road that cuts across interior mountains covered in luxuriant foliage.

Beaches along the southern coast have white sand and calm Caribbean water for swimming and sunning. On the Atlantic side, black-sand beaches provide protected coves and good waves for watersports. Reefs along the southwestern coast make for interesting snorkeling and divers can explore sunken ships in **Saint-Pierre Harbor** (☆). Fishing is a way of life on Martinique and the deep Gulf Stream waters are filled with game fish.

Fun in the Sun



Martinique's best beaches are along the southern and southwestern coasts, where warm Caribbean waters are calm and the beaches are wide sweeps of soft, white sand. Visitors staying in the popular Trois-Ilets area have a choice of fine strands, but the truly spectacular beaches are farther east along the southern cape. On the wilder Atlantic side, surfers find good waves rolling onto black-sand beaches in reef-protected coves.

Certified divers will enjoy exploring the deep, clear waters between Diamond Rock and Sainte-Anne on the far southern coast and poking around sunken ships in Saint-Pierre Harbor. Anyone with a mask and snorkel can find underwater beauty along close-in reefs and boulders in shallow water off the southwestern coast.

A Note on Nudity

There are no designated nude beaches on Martinique, but topless bathing is standard practice, even around hotel pools, and you may even see a bottomless sunbather in a remote location. What you'll see more often is beachside changing. In the tourist areas, swimsuit vendors (actually gorgeous, free-spirited models) will gladly slip into and out of different suits for potential customers (or anyone who asks). You'll also see uninhibited tourists stripping out of their street clothes and into their swimsuits on beaches, but usually not at hotel pools.

Beaches

Southern Beaches

From Sainte-Luce to Le Vauclin

Anse Mabouyas introduces a string of marvelous beaches that ring the southern cape of Martinique. The area is small and used mostly by islanders, which means it's quiet and uncrowded most of the time. Find it at the end of a rough path off D7 between the neighborhoods

of Trois-Rivières and Quartier Désert, west of Sainte-Luce.

Anse Désert is near the Mercure Les Amandiers Inn. This is a great beach with a wonderful swimming cove. There are no facilities, so it's used mainly by guests of the hotel.

Anse Corps de Garde (☆) is a long stretch of sand with parking space off D7 west of the town of Sainte-Luce. This is a popular beach with restaurants, sports equipment and restrooms.

A bit closer to town, **Anse Gros Raisins** (☆) has calm water and a long beach that handles many people without being crowded. Rent a kayak or windsurfer from Fun Bike Nature.

The town of Rivière-Pilote has recently put showers, picnic tables and playground equipment on the beach at **Anse Figuier** (☆). The sand slopes gradually into the calm water's depths, and there is good snorkeling around the rocks. This is promoted as a family beach and nudity is forbidden.

While you're in the area, stop at the **Ecomusée de Martinique** (☆) next to the beach inside an old two-story Créole-style house. Interesting displays cover the island's progression from pre-Colombian times through the booming plantation years. Open Tuesdays-Sundays, 9am-5pm. Entrance fee: 20FF/3.33€/$2.85. ☎ 62-79-14; fax 62-73-77.

When you come to Pointe Borgnesse on N5, you will have an outstanding view of **Cul-de-Sac Marin** (☆) and the red roofs of Club Med across the water on Pointe Marin. Walk along the waterfront before you continue on to the fabled beaches around Sainte-Anne.

Fishing and pleasure boats leave from this harbor. (See the "Boating and Fishing," section on pages 99-102.)

Plage Municipale (☆), Sainte-Anne's city beach, is at the far end of the Club Med beach, and it lives up to its splendid reputation. There are dive shops, snack shacks, sports equipment kiosks, restrooms and a playground right on the palm-shaded white sand. This is a family beach with clear, shallow water and lots of noisy activity. The city charges a small fee for parking, which, while reasonable, adds up if you come here several times.

> **TIP**
>
> You can avoid the charge by parking on the street (there are spaces past the meters in the Belfond neighborhood and near the entrance to Club Med) then following locals through an opening in the fence beside Touloulou Restaurant.

If you visit only one beach on Martinique, it should be **Grand Anse des Salines** (☆) on the southern cape past Sainte-Anne. Often called the "Pearl of the Antilles," it has a 1½-mile-long cove of palm-lined white sand. Of course, this is one of the most popular beaches on the island, so expect plenty of company on weekends and holidays. However, weekdays are surprisingly quiet, especially during the off-season. Showers, restrooms, picnic tables and food vendors are located all along the beach and there's a good seafood restaurant (Les Délices de la Mer) at the tip of Pointe des Salines.

WARNING

Watch out for *mancenilliers* (manchineel) trees on the southern beaches. Sap from the tree and juice from the fruit are poisonous and will burn your skin. Most of these trees are marked with red paint. Take a good look at one that is marked so you'll recognize those that aren't.

Grande-Terre (☆) is almost an eastern extension of Grande Anse. It has the same white sand shaded by coconut palms, but the water here is a bit rougher, and you may find fewer people. Once you round the point, you move from the waters of the Caribbean to those of the Atlantic.

Ilet Cabrits and Table au Diable can be seen offshore.

Since the public road ends soon after Grande-Terre, you will have to take a hiking trail around the Pointe d'Enfer to reach **Anse Trabaud** (☆) and **Baie des Anglais**, two secluded little pieces of paradise that are slowly becoming known to tourists. Since they are along the tip of the island where the Caribbean meets the Atlantic, the wind blows harder and the waves surge higher as you progress farther along the coast. There are no facilities here, but that's a plus for nature lovers and romantics who prefer their beaches untamed and isolated.

You must pay a small per-car fee and be out before the road closes at 6pm.

It's possible to reach these two beaches on a private road that begins just over a mile from Sainte-Anne off D9, near the ruins of Val-d'Or. Watch for a sign that indicates the way to Baie des Anglais.

The beaches north of Baie des Anglais on the east coast can be reached by taking D33 off D9 south of Le Marin. At the fork in the road, veer right onto a narrow signed road to reach **Cap Chevalier** (☆). All the

coves and beaches in this area have good waves for watersports and nearly-deserted sand for sunning. It's also possible to hitch a ride out to **Ilet Chevalier** with one of the local fishermen or buy a 20FF/3.33€/$2.85 round-trip ticket on Taxi Cap (located near the large Chez Gracieuse Restaurant at Cap Chevalier; ☎ 76-93-10).

If you veer left on D33 in the direction of Champfleury, instead of turning toward Chevalier, you'll come to an unpaved road that leads to the white sands of **Cul-de-Sac Ferré**, **Cap Macré** and **Anse Grosse Roche** (☆). Leave your car in the parking area and follow the blue-and-white path sign down to the water.

At the far end of the path, the vast palm-shaded white beach at Anse Grosse Roche meets the splendid blue-green Atlantic.

All along the coast, you'll find little pockets of soft sand on protected lagoons.

The beaches south of Le Vauclin aren't outstanding, but they'll do if you're in the area. **Petit Macabou** and **Grand Macabou** can be reached by turning east off N6 a mile or so south of town at a sign pointing toward Macabou. Petit has calmer water, but may be littered. A 15-minute walk will take you to Grand Macabou, where the ocean is rougher and the beach has less shade. You'll probably have this place all to yourself, especially during the week. **La Pointe Faula**, just south of the town's fishing pier on the coast road, is popular with families because of the protected sand banks that make it possible to walk far out into the ocean in very shallow water.

From Trois-Ilets to Le Diamant

This *tourist peninsula* has some wonderful beaches, and you should explore to find the one that suits you best. **Anse Mitan** is at the end of D38 and the first public beach past Pointe du Bout. Expect a crowd,

especially during high season when nearby hotels are packed to capacity. The water is crystal clear and there are plenty of restaurants, bars and shops around. You can rent all sorts of sports equipment and arrange diving and boating excursions.

Anse Mitan is the closest public beach to Fort-de-France. You can take the ferry to the Pointe du Bout marina, then walk to the beach.

Anse à l'Ane is quickly developing and losing its wild charm, but it is still a handsome golden-sand beach shaded by coconut palms. If you have a car, drive about three miles farther south to the fabulous beaches of **Anse Noire** (☆) and **Anse Dufour** (☆). (Turn right at a small sign indicating the road to l'Anse Dufour.) Leave your car in the parking area across from the Sable d'Or Restaurant. These two beaches are side-by-side in a little cove.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Anse Dufour has light golden sand while Anse Noire, just down the hill, has black sand. It's a peculiar geological phenomenon.

Plan to have lunch at the unusual hut-style L'Anse Noire Restaurant. It sits under the trees on the beach.

Fishing boats and little houses are scattered along Dufour Beach. Noir has a long fishing pier, but you're more likely to see pleasure boats anchored offshore.

Grande Anse (☆) is full of families on the weekend, but rather quiet during the week. The long gold-sand beach is dotted with palm trees, snack shacks and small homes. This area is being heavily promoted as a vacation spot, and you'll see new construction everywhere.

As you move farther down the coast, to the south, natural vegetation invades the sand, crowds thin out, and there are more fishing boats than sailboats.

As you approach Le Diamant on the coast road, D37, you'll see Diamond Rock standing majestically out in the sea, and come upon fabulous 2.4-mile **Grande Anse du Diamant** (☆). This white-sand beach is the longest on the island, and as impressive as Grand Anse des Salines.

WARNING

The currents around Diamant are strong and swimmers often get into serious trouble. If you don't see people in the water, try another spot farther down the beach. The currents around the development called Anse Cafard are particularly dangerous.

West Coast Beaches

The Caribbean beaches north of Fort-de-France have gray or black sand. Perhaps the best is at **Anse Turin** (☆), part of a long span of sandy coast in the Le Carbet area. North of Saint-Pierre, **Anse Céron** is somewhat hidden by trees and faces Rocher de la Perle. Restrooms and picnic tables are located on the dark-gray beach.

Follow the coast road into the forest to where it ends at **Anse Couleuvre** (☆). You'll have to maneuver around potholes, but it's worth the trouble. The sea may be too rough for swimming, but the dark-sand beach is gorgeous and protected on each side by hills. It's eerily mystical when no one else is around.

If you're up for a little hiking, take the trail marked with red-and-white signs from the Couleuvre parking lot for about half a mile, where a secondary path on

the left connects with **Anse Lévrier**. The main trail continues on to **Anse à Voile**. Both are spectacular beaches, but the water is too dangerous for swimming. It's possible to hike all the way to Grand Rivière, but you must allow six hours one-way.

You'll have a good view of Dominica from Anse à Voile.

East Coast Beaches

Fine beaches stretch along the north side of **Caravelle Peninsula**. The most popular are **Plage de Tartane** (☆) and **Anse l'Etang** (☆). Both have picnic tables and snack bars, and both are crowded with tourists and fishermen during high season and on weekends. On the southern side, you can rent a sail boat at **Anse Spoutourne**, or swim in the calm waters of the bay.

The beach just before **La Trinité**, north of the peninsula, is pretty, but prone to having dirty water. You'll find better swimming near Sainte-Marie at **Anse Azérot** (☆). This is the last Atlantic beach on the north end of the island that is safe enough for swimming, and it is often busy with islanders and tourists. Turn right after a shop named Pourquoi Pas? and follow the lane to the left to get down to the beach. You'll find calm water and shaded sand.

Diving & Snorkeling

Divers don't need a specific reason to poke about underwater, but Martinique offers several. Number one, for many, is the graveyard of sunken ships at the bottom of **Saint-Pierre Harbor**. The number two spot varies among divers, but **Rocher du Diamant**, Diamond Rock, off the southwestern cape, is usually among the nominees because of its caves and tunnels. The coral gar-

dens near **Cap Enragé** and **Rocher de la Perle**, Pearl Rock, off the Caribbean coast are also popular. On the southwestern coast, **Anse d'Arlets** and **Cap Salomon** are memorable dives.

Many dive shops and major hotels offer introductory scuba courses for those who are not certified by an international organization such as PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors). Experienced divers can book boat or shore dives with several companies that have English-speaking guides.

Everyone who visits Martinique should keep a mask, snorkel and fins in a day bag for impromptu peeks at colorful fish and coral in the shallow waters off the west coast and southern capes. If you don't want to haul excess weight from home, most hotels and dive shops rent snorkeling equipment. If you want to buy some, head for **Puces Nautique**, 6 Place Maréchal Joffre, Le Marin, ☎ 74-62-12 or 23 Rue Bolivar, Fort-de-France, ☎ 60-58-48. They bill themselves as a nautical flea market, and you can find new, discounted snorkeling gear among the secondhand stuff.

Top Snorkeling Spots

The following are known for good snorkeling:

- South of the marina in **Case Pilote**
- The waters around **Anse Mitan**, near Pointe du Bout
- Around the bay at **Anse Noir**
- Along the shore between **Grand Anse d'Arlet** and **Petite Anse d'Arlet**

If you want to snorkel in deeper water, ask one of the dive centers if they will allow you to go out with the

next scuba group. You'll probably be charged a fee equal to about half the cost of a single dive, and it's an excellent way to see both the island and underwater world from a different angle. In addition, some regularly scheduled sightseeing boat tours allow passengers time to snorkel from the boat.

When diving or snorkeling, remember to protect the delicate ecosystem.

- Don't touch anything, and be careful not to disturb anything with your flippers.
- Don't take anything – except pictures with an underwater camera.
- Leave no evidence of your visit.

Dive Centers

The following outfitters offer excellent diving excursions with knowledgeable, licensed instructors and guides. (Request a guide who speaks English.) Expect to pay about 199FF/33€/$28 per dive or around 539FF/65€/$77 for a three-dive package. Centers based at hotels welcome non-guest divers.

Espace Plongée
Méridien Hotel, Trois-Ilets, ☎ 66-01-79

Planete Bleue
Pointe du Bout Marina, Trois-Ilets, ☎ 66-08-79; fax 66-10-01; www.planete-bleue.mq; e-mail planbleue@ais.mq

Ile Bleue
Pointe du Bout Marina, Trois-Ilets, ☎ 66-06-90; fax 66-13-36; www.ilebleue.com; e-mail club@ilebleue.com

Plongée Passion
Anses d'Arlet, ☎ 68-72-52

Ti Bleu
Anses d'Arlet, ☎ 68-64-78; fax 68-68-88; localize@wanadoo.fr

Subdiamond Rock
Novotel Hotel; Diamant, ☎ 76-25-80

Acqua Sud
Hotel Mercure Diamant Coralia, Diamant, ☎ 76-46-00; fax 75-25-99

UCPA
Anse Coré, Saint-Pierre, ☎ 78-21-03; fax 78-19-42

Tropicasub Plongée
La Guinguette Beach, Le Carbet, ☎ 78-38-03. Friendly and knowledgeable, Lionel and Françoise Lafont operate Tropicasub and the adjacent hotel, Madi Créole (see page 147). They specialize in wreck dives enhanced with historical background, and provide beginner and advanced PADI certification. Their new 38-foot dive boat is state-of-the-art.

Kalinago
Pointe du Marin, Sainte-Anne, ☎ 76-92-98; fax 76-80-11

Okeanos Club
Village Pierre & Vacances, Sainte-Luce, ☎ 62-52-36; fax 62-24-64

Submaroubase
Hotel Marouba, Carbet, ☎ 78-40-04; fax 55-58-71

Boating

Martinique is a paradise for mariners, whether on small sailboats rented by the hour or aboard ocean-worthy yachts chartered for the week. Those who don't want to crew their own boat can sign on as a passenger for water excursions around the island and out to nearby deserted isles. Every big marina, many of the most popular beaches, and virtually all large hotels have boating centers with various rental possibilities.

Gommiers & Yoles Rondes

Throughout your stay on the island, you'll see two types of traditional boats, *gommiers* and *yoles rondes*. The differences between the two native boats lie in the sort of wood used to build the hull, the method of steering and the number of sails.

You'll see *gommiers* pulled up on the beach in all the little fishing villages. They are painted bright colors and have a catchy name printed in large letters on their hull. Carib Indians originally built boats like these for transportation between islands and for fishing. Their craft was handed down through the years as fathers taught sons to start by cutting a white gum tree during the new moon so the boat would not rot or be infested with insects.

Racing became popular when fishermen challenged each other on their way home with the day's catch, and villagers gathered to see who would arrive first. As gum trees became hard to

find because of over-harvesting, the men began to build their boats from different types of wood. Eventually, they made other changes in an attempt to create a better and faster boat. Thus, the *yole ronde* was born. A yole has two brightly-colored square sails and is steered with a heavy paddle that requires the strength of three men to move, while the gommier has only one sail and is steered with a rudder.

If you want to see a spectacular sight, attend one of the competitions held during festivals from July to January. Teams from different fishing villages dressed in colorful outfits compete in races while residents from their town cheer them to victory.

Boat Tours

For half-day and full-day boat tours, try one of the following:

A ferry service runs between Fort- de-France and the marina at Pointe du Bout daily, 5:50am-6pm. The trip takes 20-30 minutes. For information ☎ 63-06-46.

Mikaline, Pointe du Bout, ☎ 70-30-83
A deluxe catamaran

Vedette Evasion, Route du Vauclin, ☎ 54-96-87

La Créole Cata, Trois-Ilets, ☎ 66-03-01; fax 66-03-24

Taxi Cap, Sainte-Anne, ☎ 76-93-10

Albert Mongin, Le François, ☎ 54-70-23; fax 54-27-22

Aquadiam, Diamant, ☎ 76-49-39

Passeport Pour La Mer, ☎ 67-55-54

Escapade, ☎ 70-58-54

Glass-Bottom Boat Excursions

Aquabulle, Le Marin, ☎ 74-69-69; fax 74-69-48

Seaquarium, ☎ 66-05-50; fax 66-05-52

Aquascope Seadom Explorer, ☎ 68-36-09

Zemis Aquascope, ☎ 74-87-41

Boat Rentals

For boat rentals, try one of the following:

Moorings Antilles, Le Marin, ☎ 74-75-39; fax 74-76-44; www.regatesdejuin.mq
Rents various yachts for inter-island sailing.

Bambou Yachting, Port de Plaisance, ☎ 74-78-05; fax 74-82-77
Rents sailboats.

VPM Dufour Yachting, Marina du Marin, ☎ 74-70-10; fax 74-70-20
Catamaran rentals.

Star Voyage Antilles, Pointe du Bout, ☎ 66-00-72
Rents catamarans, sailboats and motorboats.

Loca Boat, Pointe du Bout, ☎ 66-07-57
Rents a variety of boats.

Aqua-homes or live-aboards can be rented from ***Aqua Location*** *in Le Robert, ☎ 65-47-17; fax 51-52-69.*

Fishing

Big Game Fishing

The deep waters around Martinique are home to countless fish. The most popular catches are tuna, barracuda, kingfish, and bonito. If you want to spend the day at sea – with or without a fishing pole – ask your hotel to book you on a trip with an English-speaking fishing guide. Ardent fishermen may feel communication is pointless once they're on the open sea. In that case, any of the contacts below will provide an excellent experience.

Hemicap Image
☎ 34-05-84; e-mail pascalmartre@hotmail.com

Yves Pélisson
☎ 76-24-20; fax 76-13-47

Le Marin Pecheur
☎ 74-67-54; e-mail marin.pecheur@wanadoo.fr

Localizé
☎ 68-64-78

Windsurfing & Other Watersports

Most large hotels on the beach have windsurfers and other watersports equipment that can be used free of charge by guests. If your hotel is not among them, you can rent from sports shacks on the major beaches. Expect to pay between 60FF/10€/$8.50 and 100FF/16€/$14.25 per hour for most rentals.

One of the best windsurfing areas is at **Cap Michel**, near Cap Chevalier on the southern cape. However, there are no rental facilities there, so you must bring your equipment. A few of the many places that rent windsurfers, kayaks, and other equipment include:

Sports Nautiques, Novotel Le Diamant
☎ 76-24-20
Rents all types of equipment.

Caraïbe Coast Kayak, Sainte-Anne
☎ 76-76-02
Organized kayak tours.

Club Nautique du Vauclin, Le Vauclin
☎ 74-50-83
Windsurfing by the hour or complete vacation packages.

Les Kayaks du Robert, Le Robert
☎ 65-69-59
Rentals and organized kayak-snorkeling tours led by an experienced guide around the islets of Robert.

Spoutourne, Anse Spoutourne, Trinité
☎ 58-56-67
Waterskiing, sea kayaks, surf boards, windsurfers and boats for rent.

Aventures Tropicales, Trois-Islets
☎ 64-58-49; fax 64-18-76;
www.aventures-tropicales.com
Kayak trips through the lagoons and mangroves.

Loisirs Plaisirs, Anse Latouche
☎ 78-43-00
Arranges water skiing, jet-skiing and windsurfing.

Antilles Loisirs, Sainte-Luce
☎ 62-44-19
Windsurfer rental.

Hobby Cat, Sainte-Anne
☎ 76-90-77

Alizé Fun Dillon, Cap Chevalier, Anse Michel
☎ 74-71-58
Windsurfing on one of the best "wind" beaches.

Hiking

The best way to explore Martinique is on foot. Walks and hikes across the island lead to spectacular viewpoints, pretty waterfalls and isolated areas of wild tropical beauty. You can pick up maps and brochures of 31 marked trails at **Parc Naturel Regional/Maison du Tourisme Vert** (Nature Tourism Office), 9 Boulevard Général de Gaulle, Fort-de-France, ☎ 73-19-30. This office also organizes guided hikes, but most of the guides speak only French (not a major problem if you simply want someone to show you the way). Expect to pay an average of 75FF/12€/$10 per person, which includes transportation to the trail.

Guided hikes are also organized by members of the **Syndicat National des Accompagnateurs** in Montagne, and you can reach them at the Bureau de la Randonnée on Rue Victor-Hugo across from the theater ruins in Saint-Pierre. The office is open daily, 9am-5pm. ☎ 78-30-77. Check with your hotel or the following tour operators about the possibility of joining an organized hike with an English-speaking guide:

Aventures Tropicales, ☎ 64-58-49; fax 64-18-76; e-mail aventures-tropicales@wanadoo.fr; www.aventures-tropicales.com

Carib Recept, ☎ 50-93-52

Madinina Tours, ☎ 70-65-25

The following hikes are suggested for casual hikers who intend to make short trips on well-marked trails during daylight hours. Sites marked (☆) are among the most extraordinary.

Trace des Jésuites

Moderately difficult. Six hours, round-trip.

The Jesuits' Trail (☆) is one of the most popular hikes on the island. It goes through the national forest and provides close-up contact with wild vegetation, including ferns, orchids, magnolia trees and philodendrons.

Park in the lot on the left after the tunnel about a mile from the intersection of N3 (Route de la Trace) and D1 near Deux-Choux. (Another parking lot is at the other end of the trail on D1 between Deux-Choux and Gros-Morne.)

The trail begins along a ridge, then descends through thick, moist rain forest to the Lorrain River. Take a snack break somewhere along the river, then continue on up the valley to the trail's end on D1. Views of Morne Jacob and the Pitons du Carbet are splendid just before you reach the end of the trail, and there's a lookout over the mountains located on D1. Unless you've arranged for transportation from this point, return to your car by hiking back along the same trail.

Caravelle Peninsula

Easy. 1½ hours for the round-trip loop trail; 3½ hours for the longer round-trip trail.

Two connecting trails wind through the nature preserve on Caravelle Peninsula. The longer of the two veers off from the other, which is a short, easy loop designated by yellow-on-white markers. Follow the blue-on-white markers for the longer hike.

Begin at the Château Dubuc on the far eastern end of the peninsula. The first part of the trail will take you into the mangrove swamp and across bridges built over the marsh. Crabs, blue herons and sandpipers live in this humid area, and a variety of plants and trees grow in the bog.

As you near the end of the peninsula, watch for blue signs that point the way to the second trail. This route goes along the Atlantic coast through incredibly beautiful countryside, past the lighthouse (you can climb up for a look if you wish), then into a dry forest before it circles back to the starting point.

La Trace des Caps

Easy. Five trails; two-three hours for each trail.

La Trace des Caps (☆) is one long trail that goes from the southern coast near Saint-Anne almost to Le Vauclin on the Atlantic coast. It has been divided into five sections by the National Forest Office. Hike in the morning before it gets too hot as there is no shade.

Grande Anse, three miles south of Sainte-Anne, and perhaps the most beautiful beach on Martinique, makes a good departure point for two of the hikes. One goes north three miles along the coast, around

Dunkerque Point, to Anse Caritan just before Sainte-Anne. The other goes three miles in the opposite direction along the coast to Anse Trabaud. Each hike takes about two hours, one way. You pass several beaches where you can cool off in the ocean.

The other three sections of trail run from Baie des Anglais to Cap Chevalier (3.9 miles, three hours), from Cap Chevalier to Pointe Macré (4.2 miles, three hours), and then on to Petite Anse Macabou (three miles, 2½ hours). These hikes are along a stretch of coast that gets more wind; the beaches are less developed and less used. If you get all the way to Petite Anse Macabou, the water is calmer than at the other beaches.

Le Piton de Crève-Coeur

Easy to moderately difficult. Allow one hour.

For the most part, this is an undemanding hike to the top of a 650-foot hill with dramatic views of the southeastern neck of the island. The departure point is near the ruins of a sugar mill north of Sainte-Anne. Find it by taking D9 south from Le Marin toward Sainte-Anne. At the traffic circle about 1½ miles outside of town, turn east toward Cap Chevalier. When the road splits, veer right. Then, after about 1.2 miles, go straight ahead onto a dirt road (the paved road veers left). Park near the overgrown sugar mill ruins.

Look for the trail partially hidden by bushes to the right of the parking area. Steps have been added in especially steep areas, and anyone in good health should find the hike fairly easy. When you're almost to the top, you'll come to a level area with a spectacular view. Continue up to the peak for an even better panorama.

Canal de Beauregard

Moderately difficult. Three hours round-trip.

This hike would be considered easy if it weren't for the narrow path along the cliffs that requires a bit of courage and a good sense of balance to navigate. The canal was built in the late 1700s by slaves as an irrigation ditch from Fond-Saint-Denis to distilleries in Le Carbet and Saint-Pierre. It has become a pleasant hike for nature lovers.

Start in Carbet and follow the well-signed itinéraire touristique between the cemetery and gas station on D62. After less than a mile, the road becomes narrow and climbs toward an area known as Bout du Canal; then, after another mile, you will see the trail on the right between two stone structures. The trail is indicated by yellow-on-white markings.

WARNING

Don't try this hike during or right after a rain shower, because the ground may be slick and dangerous.

You'll have shade all along the path and opportunities to swim in the freshwater basin near Fonds-Saint-Denis. In addition, there are handsome views of the Carbet Valley and the Pitons du Carbet.

Absalon Loop on Route de la Trace

Easy. Three hours, round-trip.

The Absalon Loop (☆) is close to Fort-de-France, loops back to its origination point, offers shade and is easy. Because of this, you'll probably have company.

Driving north on N3, the scenic Route de la Trace, pass the Balata Gardens, then turn left on the narrow road that leads to the old Absalon spa, where you'll find parking. The trail starts at a bridge that goes to a pool and begins with a rather steep climb into the forest. After about half a mile, you'll come to a junction, where you can hike down to Duclos River or walk along a bluff overlooking the valley – go along the bluff. You walk along the ridge for about 45 minutes then start downhill. The path crosses a couple of streams, then comes to another trail that will take you back almost to the parking area.

Mont Pelée

Difficult. Five to nine hours, round-trip (depending on which trails you take).

If you're up to the challenge, the hike to Mont Pelée (☆) is one of the best treks on Martinique.

> **WARNING**
>
> Don't try hiking here during or immediately after a rain shower, since the path becomes very muddy.

There are several trails on the volcano, but the most direct route is on the **Aileron Trail**. To find it, turn

left onto D39 off Route de la Trace just north of Morne Rouge. The trail starts at the end of the road, near a shelter. In the first two hours of hiking you'll ascend 1,400 feet to the second shelter. (You can also get to this spot by taking the drier, but more complicated, trail from Grande Savane off D10 near Precheur.)

TIP

It's a good idea to hire a guide for any hikes on Mont Pelée. Vegetation often hides holes and other obstacles that could be dangerous if you slip into them on the steep trail.

At the second shelter, another trail leads to **La Caldeira**, the most scenic area that looks over the crater of Mont Pelée. It will take you another 2½ hours to hike the Caldeira Trail. If you plan to tackle it, be sure to bring plenty of water and snacks, and leave early enough to get down before sunset. Another trail, near a third shelter, goes on to the top of Chinois. It's not particularly difficult, but it will take about an hour to go up and back – then you'll still have the return hike to your car.

Forêt de Montravail

Easy. You can wander the trails here for as long as you wish. Allow an hour to enjoy all the sights.

The Montravail Forest (☆) in the hills above the town of Sainte-Luce has been marked by the Forest Office for nature walks. Take D36 or D17 off N5 into the forest, or meet with a group called **Journée Verte** (☎ 62-54-23) that hikes from Saint-Luce each morn-

ing at 9:30. About a dozen marked paths meander through the trees. Placards identify various plants.

Biking

Only experienced bikers in good condition will want to attempt the steep, narrow, winding roads on Martinique. However, even casual cyclists can enjoy a spin along lightly used back roads in small villages and beach towns. Mountain biking is popular on the island, and you will find plenty of places to do this type of riding.

The **Parc Naturel Régional** has a list of biking routes available in their office at 9 Boulevard Général de Gaulle, Fort-de-France, ☎ 64-42-59. They can also recommend guides and rental shops.

TIP

Ask for a **VTT,** vélo tout terrain, which is an 18-speed, all-terrain bike that will handle any surface you come across.

BICYCLE RENTAL COMPANIES	
Sud Loisirs, Sainte-Anne	☎ 76-81-82
Sainte-Luce Locations, Sainte-Luce	☎ 62-49-66
VT Tillt, Pointe du Bout	☎ 66-01-01
Aventures Tropicales, Fort-de-France	☎ 64-58-49
Blue Monday, Diamant	☎ 76-18-80

Call J. Vartel at VT Tillt if you want to tour parts of the island by bike.

Motorcycling

If you wish to rent a motorcycle, try one of the following companies.

MOTORCYCLE RENTAL COMPANIES	
Discount in Pointe-à-Bout	☎ 66-54-37
Funny in Fort-de-France	☎ 63-33-05
Scootonnerre in Le Diamant	☎ 76-41-12
Centrale du Cycle in Lamentin	☎ 50-28-54

Golfing

Martinique has only one golf course, but you can play it over and over without tiring of the challenge or sweeping views. The 18-hole beauty was designed by Robert Trent Jones, Sr. and laid out on 150 acres of rolling hills that were once part of the Pagerie Plantation in the tourist town of Trois-Ilets. It's an internationally renowned 6,640-yard, par-71 course that is considered one of the most beautiful in the Caribbean.

Pros (English-speaking) are on hand year-round at the pro shop.

The course is part of the **Martinique Golf and Country Club**, but is open to everyone. A shuttle van takes golfers to and from several nearby hotels in the Pointe du Bout area between 8:30am and 5:30pm each day. Facilities include a restaurant, bar and clubhouse with dressing rooms. Caddies and club rental can be arranged.

Recently, the Leadbetter Academy became part of the club. David Leadbetter and his team of pros conduct golf camps year-round for golfers of all levels using techniques adapted to each individual. In addition, the Country Club has tennis courts, aerobic and yoga

classes, and workout facilities that may be used by nonmembers at reasonable rates.

Green fees run 270FF/45€/$38 for 18 holes, or you can get a weekly pass for 1,323FF/220€/$189. Cart rental is 250FF/42€/$36, clubs are 100FF/17€/$14, and caddies charge 40FF/7€/$6. If you have a handicap card, be sure to bring it along. ☎ 68-32-81; fax 68-38-97.

Mini-Golf

Mini-golf courses are located at **Madiana Beach** in Schoelcher (no telephone) and **Anse l'Etang** in Tartane, ☎ 58-02-90.

Tennis

Tennis is popular on Martinique, and all the major resorts have at least one court. (Hotel La Batelière has six.) Guests are also welcome at **Martinique Golf and Country Club**, ☎ 68-32-81, where they can reserve a court for about 135FF/22€/$19 per hour.

Horseback Riding

Seeing the island from the back of a horse gives you a whole different view. Try a sunset ride along the beach or hire a guide to take you into the forest. Expect to pay about 417FF/70€/$60 for a half-day riding tour (refreshments provided). Most stables also rent

horses for shorter rides at about 113FF/19€/$16 per hour.

STABLES/HORSE RENTALS	
La Gourmette Highway D45/Didier	☎ 64-20-16
Ranch Jack Trois-Islets	☎ 68-37-69 or 68-63-97
Black Horse La Pagerie/Trois-Ilets	☎ 66-00-04 or 68-37-80
L'Hippocampe Habitation Carrere/Lamentin	☎ 57-06-71
Rance Val d'Or Sainte-Anne	☎ 76-70-58

One-of-a-Kind Tours

The following companies are recommended for land, air, water or combination sightseeing tours:

Journée Vert, Sainte-Luce, ☎ 62-54-23.
Isabelle Houdayer arranges hikes and motor tours into the forest and mangroves around Le Marin.

Passport pour la Mer, Le Robert, ☎ 67-55-54.
Offers a variety of land, air, and water tours. Their catamaran excursion is particularly popular.

Escapade Tour, Le Robert, ☎ 71-58-77.
Organizes land and water tours of outer islands, forest, mangroves and fond blanc (white sand banks off the coast). You may also call the office in Fort-de-France. ☎ 70-58-54.

Caribtours, Lamentin, ☎ 50-93-60; fax 50-48-49.
Has tours that include transfers from the airport and sightseeing by helicopter. They also have an agency in Pointe-à-Bout. ☎ 66-04-48; fax 66-07-06.

Madinina Tours, Fort-de-France, ☎ 70-65-25; fax 73-09-53.
Organizes various excursions to all parts of the island.

Caribjet, at the airport in Lamentin, ☎ 66-02-56 or 51-90-00.
Arranges day-trips and sightseeing excursions by plane.

ULM Caraïbes, Le François, ☎ 74-32-23.
Operates ultra-light seaplane trips. Ask for Thierry Voyer, the instructor pilot, at Les Brisants Restaurant.

Heli-Caraïbes, Fort-de-France, ☎ 73-30-03.
Gives helicopter tours of the island.

Photographers may want to contact **Air Tourism Instruction Service**, an organization that regularly takes reporters and cameramen on fact-finding tours. They also charter their six-seat Cessna 175 to tourists for around 8,000FF/1,300€/$1,100 per hour, including the pilot. The plane has removable panels to permit aerial photography. ☎ 51-66-88; fax 51-33-03.

A group of six can share the cost – not an unreasonable price for a truly unique experience.

Shop Till You Drop

Martinique is a showcase for French merchandise, and you can find chic fashions, famous-name perfumes and fine crystal at prices below those charged in the United States. However, the real bargains are on local crafts, rum and Caribbean art. Expect to save about 20% at stores that offer discounts to visitors who pay with foreign credit cards or travelers' checks.

Pricing, discounts and taxes are a bit complicated on the French islands. By law, all posted prices must include taxes, so it may appear that everything is overpriced. Anything that is bought for export is eligible for a 20% refund, if it is bought in a duty-free shop. Therefore, it's wise to browse all you want, but buy only in certain stores. To qualify for the 20% refund, you must also prove that you are a foreign visitor by paying with a credit card from an overseas bank or traveler's check issued in foreign funds. Paying with cash and showing a passport won't do.

Stores are usually open Mon.-Fri., 8:30am-12:30pm and 2-5pm; Sat., 8am-noon.

Malls are open Mon.-Sat., 8am-8pm.

Don't let all these complicated rules dampen your shopping spirit. You'll have a wonderful time looking at the vast variety of merchandise, and if you find something you want to take home, try to buy it in one of the established stores that call themselves duty-free or offer discounts to foreign buyers.

Favorite Gift Items

Most tourists take home a bottle of **Martinican rum**. Connoisseurs say it is one of the best in the world because it is made from sugarcane rather than molasses. The dark, aged rum, called *vieux rhum*, is the best and the most expensive. If you like it, purchase all you

*If you don't have time to visit one of the distilleries, **La Case à Rhum** at the airport has a good selection.*

can legally bring back home (one tax-free liter per person), because most brands are not exported to the United States.

Items not found in the States are a bargain at any price.

Other items to look for include jewelry made by local artisans, bamboo items, baskets, wooden sculptures, pottery and dolls dressed in madras costumes. The most popular jewelry items include the ***collier choux*** (a traditional necklace) and the ***chaine forçat*** (a convict's chain). In the outdoor markets, pick up coconut fudge, crystalized fruit, jams made from exotic fruit and fresh spices.

Fort-de-France

The downtown area is a tangle of narrow streets lined with Créole-style buildings, islanders selling colorful crafts and merchants displaying flowers and fruits. Tucked among the cheerful clutter, you'll find magnificent French boutiques.

TIP

Pick up a map at the Tourist Information Office on Boulevard Alfassa at the waterfront.

From the Tourist Office, walk across the street to **La Savanne Park**, where several open-air pavilions house vendors selling handmade crafts, cold drinks, madras clothing, batik beachwear and souvenir T-shirts.

Department Stores

Perhaps the most enjoyable way to shop the capital is to stroll aimlessly up and down the streets off **Rue**

Victor Hugo, one of the major shopping streets. However, if you prefer a more organized plan, start at **Roger Albert** (7 Victor Hugo), where you qualify for a 20% refund when you pay for your purchases with a traveler's check or major credit card. This large, well-organized store has a good selection of French perfumes, cosmetics and luxury goods – Baccarat, Cartier, Rochas, Clarins, Lancôme.

Note that pharmacies will sell French cosmetics and diet aids in addition to medications.

When you leave Roger Albert's, turn left and walk up to Rue Schoelcher, where you will find **Galeries Lafayette** and **Merlande**, near the Saint-Louis Cathedral. (Au Printemps is also in this area, but be aware that it is not an authentic branch of the Parisian store.) At 87 Rue Lamartine, the department store **Nouvelles Galeries** sells a wide assortment of gifts, souvenirs and household items. Other upscale shops are on **Rue Moreau de Jonnes** and **Rue Antoine Siger**. **Cadet Daniel**, on Antoine Siger, sells Baccarat crystal and Limoges china.

Wine & Local Crafts

Wine connoisseurs will find a good selection of French vintages at **La Cave à Vin** (118 Rue Victor Hugo), and you can make your rum purchases at **La Case à Rhum** (5 Rue de la Liberté). Art lovers will want to linger at both the **Galerie d'Art** at 89 Rue Victor Hugo and **Centre des Metiers Arts** across from the tourist office on Rue Ernest Deporge.

Handcrafted jewelry is offered at **Bijouterie Onyx** (26 Rue Isambert) and **Gold Centres** (88 Rue Antoine Siger or 44 Rue Victor Hugo). **Au Gommier**, at 22 Rue Victor Hugo, has exquisite handmade linens and dresses.

Malls & Supermarkets

For hopeless mall-addicts, the **Centre Commercial la Galleria** is on Highway N1 between Fort-de-France and the airport in Lamentin. The Galleria is almost a typical American mall, but with a splash of Caribbean zest. A mega-supermarket, **HyperU**, is at one end, selling delicious French treats and basic necessities. Several restaurants in the food court serve everything from pizza to sweet-and-sour pork. More than a hundred businesses, including shops, hair salons, pharmacies and professional offices, line the fashionable, air-conditioned corridors of the two-level enclosed mall. It's not unique, but you can find almost anything you need in the cool, clean, modern complex.

Trois-Ilets

Across the bay, in the little beach communities around Trois-Ilets, shoppers will find many chic boutiques selling stylish clothes, luxury china and crystal, and interesting crafts and art. At **Artisanat** and **Poterie des Trois-Ilets** you can watch the artisans at work making Carib-style vases, lamps and pots, which are also for sale. The workshop is about two miles east of town on a signed road off D7.

The main road, **Avenue de L'Impératrice**, leading from the marina at Pointe du Bout is crowded with boutiques and gift shops. **Phileas Fogg** is popular for games and gifts; **Boutique Lafleur** has a good selection of women's clothes designed in the Martinique style; **La Bella Matadore** sells original 18-karat gold jewelry modeled after historical designs. **Carib-Curious**, near the Bambou Hotel at Anse Mitan, is excellent for one-stop souvenir shopping.

Le Diamant

Near Le Diamant, between Pointe Chéry and town, **Atelier Céramique** exhibits the work of David and Jeannine England, British artists living and working on Martinique. In town, look for souvenirs at **Papaye** or **Coeur Caraïbes**. There's also a daily craft market on the square near the church.

Monésie

Stop at **Art et Nature** in Monésie, inland from Sainte-Luce, to see Joel Gilbert create beautiful pictures on wood using 130 different types of island sand. The studio shop is open Monday-Friday, 10am-1pm and 2:30-6pm. This is truly a fascinating process. The pictures are for sale. In the same area, Victor Anicet, makes wonderful ceramics. Look for signs on the highway indicating **Ateliers Artisanales**, which are artists' workshops open to visitors.

Sainte-Anne

Saint-Anne has several good shops and a craft market. Near the town square, you'll find **La Malle des Iles** and **Folie Caraïbes**, which display jewelry, baskets, pottery and various souvenirs.

Saint-Pierre

Stop at **Place Bertin** near the Musée Vulcanologique to browse through the market. Art, jewelry, pottery and souvenirs are for sale at nearby **Look Caraïbe**.

TILO

The TILO stores and their ads are everywhere. Stop at their craft studio on N1 between Le Lamentin and Le Robert. Every tourist publication carries a bright yellow ad worth 10% off all purchases over 200FF/33€/$28, so be sure to clip it. It will save a few dollars on T-shirts, beach towels, household items and other souvenirs made in their workshops from stunning fabrics.

If you're looking for a swimsuit, check out the models who parade along the southern beaches showing off and selling the latest styles.

Along the Northern Atlantic Coast

Try to allow time for a stop at **La Paille Caraïbe** in Morne des Esses, inland from Sainte-Marie. This is the workshop where skillful artisans weave baskets, hats and other products from straw using the traditional Carib technique. Visitors are invited to watch the process, and finished items are for sale. They make excellent functional souvenirs and gifts.

After Dark

Casinos

Martinique's casinos are in prime tourist locations just outside **Fort-de-France** and across the bay in **Pointe du Bout**. Both offer entertainment and American-style roulette and black jack, as well as slot machines.

You must be at least 18 years old and show identification to enter any casino.

Both request proper attire, which means a jacket or shirt and tie for men, and a dress or nice slacks for women.

Casino Batelière Plazza
Next to La Batelier Hotel, Schoelcher
☎ 61-73-23

Slot machine room is open noon-3am daily; no entrance fee. Gaming room is open 8pm-3am daily: entrance fee is 69FF/11€/$10.

Casino Trois-Ilets
Meridien Hotel, Pointe du Bout marina
☎ 66-00-30

Slot machine room is open noon-3am, Monday-Saturday; no entrance fee. Gaming room is open 9pm-3am, Monday-Saturday; entrance fee is 70FF/11€/$10. Closed Sunday.

Island Shows

All the big hotels and resorts schedule some type of entertainment nightly or several times per week. One of the most popular shows is the folkloric dance group, **Les Grands Ballets de la Martiniquais**. The group performs at various hotels on a rotating basis. Check with the activities desk at your hotel to find out when they will appear, or ☎ 63-43-88 for a schedule.

Discos, Nightclubs & Live Music

Discos and nightclubs zoom to the top of the hot-spot list then disappear quickly, but you can usually find local bands playing in the bars and restaurants around the marina in most large towns. Again, the activities desk at your hotel is

a good resource for leads on the current popular nightspots.

Use the following list as a general guide.

Coco Loco
Boulevard Alfassa/Fort-de-France
☎ 63-63-77
Closed Sunday

You can sit outside and listen to the music, or call for a table reservation.

Jazz sessions are popular at this hangout next to the tourist office across from the ferry dock.

Manikou Nights
Fort-de-France
☎ 50-96-95
Closed Monday

This place is the current rage as we go to press. Live bands play most nights starting around 10, and keep going until dawn. Ask any local under 30 how to find it.

Le New Hippo
24 Boulevard Allègre/Fort-de-France
☎ 72-49-03
Open nightly

Cover charge and drinks are pricey, but the music draws a large crowd.

Cyber Café
4 Rue de Blénac/Fort-de-France
Closed Sunday

This is the place to sip an espresso or beer while browsing the net – and the local singles.

Le Terminal
104 Rue Ernest-Deproge/Fort-de-France
☎ 63-03-48
Open nightly until 2am.

Try this upscale spot for a great selection of beers (60 choices) and fine whiskeys (35 brands). It's on a balcony overlooking the parking area on the waterfront and popular with the executive set.

La Baraka
Méridien Bakoua Hotel/Pointe du Bout
☎ 66-00-30

During high season, this hotel disco rocks late into the night. Off season, it can be a bit calm for some tastes, just right for others.

Le Chalet
Quartier Laugier /Pointe du Bout
☎ 62-63-61

Young islanders favor this disco. Ask around for directions.

Le Neptune
Morne Lacroix/Le Diamant
☎ 76-25-47
Closed Monday

Music and dancing start around 10pm and go late into the night.

The Cotton Club
Pointe du Bout
☎ 66-03-09

Located near the Bakoua Hotel, the club gets going about 11pm with music and a great selection of good liquors. A place that runs karaoke nights and still draws a big crowd must be doing something right.

La Navigation
Boulevard Kennedy/Sainte-Luce
Closed Wednesday and Sunday

This beach bar is a great spot for people watching and local color.

Brasserie Planète-Diamant
Le Diamant
☎ 76-49-82

The Brasserie features a good choice of draft beers.

The live bands that play here Friday through Sunday nights could raise the dead. (Appropriately, it's located right next to the cemetery.)

H-Club
Ducos, ☎ 56-00-69

Dance the night away at this club that often features local bands.

Zipp's Club
Le François, ☎ 54-65-45
Closed Monday and Tuesday

Live music by local bands is the highlight here, but regulars come in to dance even when the music is recorded. Things get rolling around 10pm.

Mini-Golf Beach Club
Anse l'Etang/Caravelle Peninsula
☎ 58-62-90

Tourists and locals hang out at this unlikely spot on Saturday nights to listen to live zouk bands.

Top Night Club
N1 between Le Robert and La Trinité
☎ 58-61-43

This is the place for zouk every Friday and Saturday starting around 9pm. The place is pretty quiet during the week except during local holiday periods.

Cabana Plage
Le Vauclin, ☎ 74-32-08

Located at Pointe Faula, this beach restaurant features a local band every Saturday night. Snack on a pizza, or just sip a drink while you enjoy the music.

Snack Bar Caraïbe
Saint-Pierre, ☎ 78-30-59

Don't be put off by the name. This pub features a band and 30 types of beer.

Best Places to Stay

Martinique offers every type of accommodation from luxury resorts to rural guesthouses.

A Look at the Options

Resorts

Many visitors choose to stay across the bay from Fort-de-France in the resort communities around Trois-Islets because of the abundance of tourist facilities. If it's important that your hotel have on-site restaurants, sports centers and evening entertainment, you'll want to make reservations at one of the large resorts in this area.

Out-of-the-Way Choices

However, some of Martinique's more interesting accommodations are located in remote parts of the island. Renovated plantation houses rambling across acres of land and family-run auberges set in quaint, island-style houses deep in the rain forest may be more your idea of an island retreat. If so, you'll need a car and a good map, but there are plenty of fine choices.

US Hotel Contacts

Accor, ☎ 800-221-4542; fax 914-472-0451; www.accor.com

Best Western, ☎ 800-528-1234; www.bestwestern.com

Caribbean Inns, ☎ 800-633-7411; www.caribbean-inns.com

Club Med, ☎ 800-club med; www.clubmed.com

French Caribbean International, ☎ 800-223-9815; fax 805-967-7798; www.frenchcaribbean.com

International Travel & Resorts, ☎ 800-223-9815; fax 212-476-9467

Island Trips, ☎ 800-823-2002; fax 410-692-9579; www.islandtrips.com

Relais Créole Group

Small- and medium-sized hotels in the Relais Créole group are moderately priced and usually family-run. When such an inn meets high standards of quality and service, it is given the designation Sucrier Créole.

All Relais facilities mentioned below have been granted the Sucrier label and further meet *Alive! Guide* standards of comfort in their price range.

Gîtes

The area code for Martinique is 596. When calling from the US, dial 011 + 596 (area code) + 596 (local exchange), then the six-digit number.

Gîtes are another possibility. By definition, they are country guesthouses, but in reality they may be anything from fully-furnished, multi-room villas to accommodations in a private residence. Each is assigned a quality rating of one to four stars and will accommodate from two to 10 guests. You can obtain a listing of these simple lodgings by contacting **Gîtes de France** in Martinique, ☎ 73-74-74; fax 63-55-92; www.itea.fr/gdf/972.

Vacation Homes & Villas

Car rental as well as land tour bookings may be made through the Villa Rental Service, which also calls itself Centrale de Réservation de la Martinique.

If you're staying at least a week, check into the possibility of renting a vacation home. The **Villa Rental Service** of the Martinique Tourist Office can arrange rental of villas, apartments and studios near good beaches and tourist attractions for periods of one week to several months. Be aware that these rentals, like gîtes, probably do not include maid service and may not include sheets and towels, though many will arrange for these services at an extra charge. If you can live with these arrangements, you can get some incredible bargains and settle into the fantasy life of living like a native. For information, contact the helpful people in the villa department at the tourist office, ☎ 63-79-60; fax 63-11-64. A highly recommended rental company is **Caraïbes Vacances**, run by Jean Marc Poullet, ☎ 61-21-42; fax 61-28-69; www.sasi.fr/carestour.

Vacation Packages

Look into the possibility of securing a fixed-cost vacation package that includes air fare and accommodations, since they usually offer some type of advantageous pricing. A few all-inclusive resorts follow the Club Formula, which was made popular by Club Med and includes activities, meals and drinks. However, most French properties prefer to follow the continental tradition of offering their guests only rolls and coffee first thing in the morning. As the number of visitors from the United States increases, more and more hotels are setting out large buffets or serving what they consider to be a full American breakfast.

Dollar-saving packages for honeymooners, divers and groups are often available at many hotels and resorts. In addition, virtually every property knocks off a substantial percentage during the low season. If you're flexible about the exact date of your vacation, you can often bargain for a rock-bottom price by phoning the hotel directly and asking if they offer last-minute rates on nights when occupancy is expected to be low.

Pricing

The following price scale is intended as a guideline to help you choose lodging to fit your vacation budget. It is based on the cost of a double room during high season, which normally runs mid-December through Easter week. Taxes and service charges are usually included in the quoted rate.

Most hotels accept major credit cards, but be aware that small inns, rental agencies and individual villa owners may require cash or money order – possibly in French francs.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Expensive	$150-$200/174€-232€
Moderate	$100-$150/116€-174€
Inexpensive	Less than $100/116€

NOTE

Although some foreign addresses may seem vague, any taxi driver or car rental agency will be able to locate your hotel on a map. In most cases, the address we give is the major highway into town and, once there, you will be able to see your hotel. In addition, we provide the mailing address number (similar to a zip code) for further clarification.

Fort-de-France

VALMENIERE (Best Western)
Avenue des Arawaks
121 rooms
☎ 75-75-75; fax 75-69-70; US ☎ 800-528-1234
Inexpensive

Business folks at Valmeniere make use of the specially designed rooms with beds that fold out of the way to allow for more work space.

The sleek, futuristic look of this high-rise glass building catches your attention as you head into town from the airport, only three miles away. All rooms are air-conditioned and have hair dryer, mini bar, safe and cable TV. Nonsmoking rooms are available and there are facilities for guests with disabilities. Among the three-star amenities are a fitness center, spa, and outdoor swimming pool. On the eighth floor, **Le Dôme Restaurant** serves Créole-style cuisine.

SQUASH HOTEL
3 Boulevard de la Marne
108 rooms
Breakfast
☎ 72-80-80; fax 63-00-74; US ☎ 800-221-4542
Inexpensive

Sports enthusiasts will like the well-equipped health club and squash courts at this modern three-star hotel in a residential area at the edge of town. Guests are mostly business travelers. Enjoy a dip in the pool, dinner in **La Pinta Restaurant**, or a drink in the court-side bar at the end of the day. Tourists who want to be near town will find comfortable rooms with air-conditioning, cable TV and a mini bar. Facilities for guests with disabilities are also available.

HOTEL L'IMPERATRICE
15 Rue de la Libérté
24 rooms
Breakfast
☎ 63-06-82; fax 72-06-30
Inexpensive

In its price range, the Impératrice is a wonderful find. Dignitaries have met and stayed here for years, and the hotel will remind you of elegant living in another era. The location couldn't be better – overlooking Place de la Savane between the waterfront and the Schoelcher Library. All rooms are air-conditioned with private baths. Ask for a room with a balcony facing the park.

Even if you don't stay here, plan to have a drink in the bar or dinner at **Le Joséphine Restaurant**.

Schoelcher

LA BATELIERE
20 Rue des Alizés
200 rooms, three suites, five duplex apartments
☎ 61-49-49; fax 61-70-57
In the US: Martinique Select, ☎ 800-823-2002; fax 410-692-9579
E-mail info@wwte.com
Expensive

Business and leisure groups from Europe often stay at La Batelière, but most of the staff speaks English, and folks from the US fit in nicely.

Positioned on the coast near the capital, this luxury hotel has an enviable and dramatic setting. The five-story building occupies 12 acres of landscaped gardens on a bluff above a private beach created by a crescent-shaped rock jetty. All rooms are spacious, elegantly furnished and feature Italian marble bath, air-conditioning, TV, safe, mini bar and private balcony.

The **Blue Marine Restaurant**, overlooking the sea, serves international cuisine, while the beach-side **Sucrier Restaurant** features light meals and snacks. In the evening, you can choose dancing in the popular **Le Queen Disco** or relaxing in the piano bar. The nearby casino offers a gaming room with roulette and blackjack, as well as an arcade with 100 slot machines.

Guests enjoy the use of six lighted tennis courts and a fully staffed fitness center. You'll be tempted to spend all your time floating in the large pool built at the edge of a cliff that plunges to the sea below. If you have more energy, take a short walk down below the cliff to the private beach, where a PADI dive shop and sports center offer all kinds water activities.

Trois-Ilets Resort Area

BAKOUA (Sofitel)
Pointe du Bout, 97229 Trois Islets
149 rooms and suites
Breakfast buffet
☎ 66-02-02; fax 66-00-41
In the US: ☎ 800-322-2223 or 800-221-4542 or 800-823-2002
www.frenchcaribbean.com
Expensive

A bakoua is a cone-shaped hat that is part of the traditional island costume.

The elegant Bakoua seems to step gracefully down the landscaped hillside to the private beach at the edge of the sea. It has been one of Martinique's finest hotels for many years and, after recent refurbishing, it is more splendid than ever. Although the guest rooms are small, common areas are vast and elegantly furnished. All guests enjoy air-conditioned accommodations with TV, mini-fridge, marble bathroom, and either a terrace or balcony. Ask for a room facing the water – you'll never notice the lack of space.

The Fort-de-France ferry dock and Pointe du Bout shops are a short walk from the hotel.

During the day, most of the activity centers around water. On the private beach, a wide patch of fine sand dotted with palm-frond umbrellas meets the sea in a lovely protected cove. Offshore, a floating bar serves drinks to guests who are swimming or snorkeling nearby. All types of sports equipment are available from the beach hut, and deep-sea fishing and scuba diving can be arranged through the hotel.

The freshwater swimming pool is designed to fool the eye with a trompe l'oeil effect that seemingly merges the pool with the sea. Across the harbor, Fort-de-France spreads out below towering mountains. All together, it is a fabulous sight. If you're not in the mood for water activities, the hotel also features

squash and tennis courts, a game room and a multilingual library.

Bakoua's two restaurants cover the spectrum of dining possibilities. **La Sirène**, the beach bistro, serves local specialties and light fare throughout the day, and until 10pm Sundays through Thursdays. The more cosmopolitan **Châteaubriand Restaurant** opens at seven each evening to serve a wide variety of international and Créole dishes by candlelight. Nightly entertainment adds to the upbeat charm and classy atmosphere. On Tuesdays, a steel band performs, and Saturdays are Salsa nights. While both are great entertainment, make a reservation for the Friday night Créole buffet and folkloric grande ballet. It's outstanding.

CARAYOU (Novotel)
Pointe du Bout, 97229 Trois Ilets
201 rooms
Breakfast buffet
☎ 66-04-04; fax 66-00-57
In the US: French Caribbean International, ☎ 800-322-2223; fax 805-967-7798.
www.frenchcaribbean.com
Moderate

If you're looking for good value in the liveliest part of Martinique, head for Carayou. The friendly staff greets you (in English) with a cool drink while you check in, then whisks you off to your large, sunny room. Expect to find functional, streamlined furnishings in the air-conditioned rooms, with TVs, phones, safes, hair dryers and balconies.

The swimming pool is huge. A waterfall spills from a rock wall at one end, and plenty of lounge chairs are available on the wide, palm-shaded deck. The hotel backs up to a private, white-sand beach that offers a range of watersports, including windsurfing,

kayaking and snorkeling. Seven acres of landscaped tropical gardens provide walking paths, a playground and tennis courts. Friendly experts at the activities desk in the lobby can arrange all types of diving, hiking and sightseeing excursions.

There's also a children's program during peak season.

One of the best things about Carayou is its location near the marina where ferries drop off and pick up Fort-de-France passengers. Also, guests can easily walk to the beach at Anse Mitan or the shops and restaurants in Pointe du Bout. You probably will want a car for touring, but if you prefer to leave the driving to others, this location is ideal.

CAMELIA (Best Western)
Les-Hauts de L'Anse-Mitan, 97229 Trois Ilets
49 rooms (23 with kitchenettes)
☎ 66-05-85; fax 66-11-12
E-mail karibea@cgit.com
In the US: ☎ 800-528-1234
Inexpensive

Madame Bara and her staff welcome Americans (in English) to this charming, three-story hotel with panoramic views of Fort-de-France Bay from the heights of Anse Mitan. The rooms are small, with functional furniture and decorations that are modern and clean, but hardly deluxe. No matter. You will spend all your time at the nearby beaches, shops and restaurants on Pointe-du-Bout.

Each air-conditioned room has a telephone, TV, bathroom with shower, narrow balcony and a small refrigerator. About half the rooms have a kitchenette for preparing light meals. On the grounds you'll find an outdoor pool, game room, restaurant, playground, and a large terrace for relaxing and admiring the views.

HOTEL FRANTOUR
Anse à l'Ane, 97229 Trois Ilets
77 rooms
Breakfast
☎ 68-31-67; fax 68-37-65
Inexpensive

On weekdays, the hotel offers special entertainment and theme dinners, while the activities desk schedules both group and individual tours.

Set in a tropical garden on the beach at Anse à l'Ane, this two-level island-style hotel offers a lot for the price. Rooms are basic, but each is air-conditioned and opens onto a balcony or patio. In addition to the usual amenities, there are hair dryers, VCRs, dryers for swimsuits, mini bars and safes.

Out on the beach, guests enjoy complimentary use of lounge chairs and watersports equipment. The on-site dive shop will arrange scuba excursions, windsurfing, boat rental, kayaking and sailing.

LA PAGERIE (Mercure Inn)
Pointe du Bout, 97229 Trois Ilets
98 rooms (68 with kitchenettes)
Buffet breakfast
☎ 66-05-30; fax 66-00-99
In the US: Martinique Select, ☎ 800-823-2002; fax 410-692-9579
www.martinique-hotels.com
Inexpensive

La Pagerie has a European ambiance, and most of the guests are from France, but the staff speaks English and is friendly.

La Pagerie was completely refurbished recently, so all the rooms and common areas are fresh and comfortable. While not on the water, it is within walking distance of the beach at Anse Mitan, and there's a large pool and deck in a garden courtyard on the beautifully landscaped grounds. Guests enjoy calm surroundings and friendly attention in an enclosed oasis that's only a few steps from all the action in Pointe du Bout.

TIP

Ask for a room with a kitchenette (no extra charge), if you want to keep drinks and snacks on hand.

The three-story Louisiana-style hotel offers air-conditioned rooms with TVs and balconies, a restaurant serving Créole and international cuisine, and quick access to the marina and shops.

LE BAMBOU
Anse Mitan, 97229 Trois Ilets
136 bungalows and apartments
Continental breakfast
☎ 66-01-39; fax 66-05-05
Inexpensive

You'll think you're at summer camp on the beach when you stay at Le Bambou. Each little air-conditioned bungalow is paneled top to bottom in wood and equipped with streamlined, no-nonsense furniture.

This is not five-star luxury, but it is five-star fun.

The family-campground quality and beach-party spirit make it impossible to have a bad time. A local band plays every night after dinner in the huge open-air dining room, and you won't be able to resist joining the crowd on the dance floor.

Walkways wind through the landscaped grounds to connect the modest duplex bungalows with the pool, beach and dining area. Watersports equipment is available at the beach. You can walk into town and to the ferry dock at the marina.

There's a great view of the sea from the restaurant.

LE MERIDIEN
Pointe du Bout, 97229 Trois Ilets
300 rooms
Buffet breakfast
☎ 66-00-00; fax 66-00-74
In the US: ☎ 800-543-4300
Expensive

You could check in at Le Méridien and never leave!

If you're willing to give up island charm and originality for savoir-faire, this high-rise owned by Air France is for you. You know what to expect: tour groups (mostly French), conventions (mostly French), and oh-so-loyal guests (mostly French). Still, it is a gorgeous place and it's located right on a superb double-crescent beach. Every room has a view of Fort-de-France Bay.

There are restaurants, bars, shops, entertainment (including a casino), pools, tennis courts and watersports to keep you busy for days without ever leaving the grounds. If you do decide to explore, the hotel will arrange boat trips, island tours, scuba outings, or private car rentals.

La Capitaine, the hotel's main restaurant, serves international cuisine and hosts dancing and entertainment several times during the week. For more casual dining, the beachside **Le Cocoterais** has a varied menu of snacks and light meals.

Guest rooms offer no surprises. All are nicely decorated, well maintained and designed for comfort. The only thing worthy of mention is the outstanding view. Every room overlooks the water, and the sight of the capital city twinkling in the distance after dark is more than worth the price.

DIAMANT
Diamant Les Bains, 97223 Diamont
27 rooms and bungalows
Continental breakfast
☎ 76-40-14; fax 76-27-00
In the US: Martinique Select, ☎ 800-823-2002; fax 410-692-9579
Inexpensive

What a bargain. This small beachfront resort run by the Andrieu family is charming, peaceful, and English-speaker friendly.

There are better beaches nearby, but waves washing onto the adjacent sand produce a soothing noise for napping or reading under one of the palm trees.

Consider reserving one of the bungalows, since rooms in the main building are rather small. Either way, you'll be comfortable, because every room is air-conditioned and equipped with a TV, phone and mini refrigerator. Decor is simple, with tile floors, bright island colors and wicker furniture.

From the seaside pool and terrace restaurant, you can see famous Diamond Rock offshore.

Hubert Andrieu oversees the kitchen and turns out wonderful French and Créole cuisine. His wife, Marie-Yvonne, tends to hotel administration. Together they are a dynamic team with a fine knack for service and hospitality.

HOTEL NOVOTEL DIAMANT
Pointe la Chéry, 97223 Diamont
181 rooms and suites
Buffet breakfast
☎ 76-42-42; fax 76-22-87
In the US: French Caribbean International ☎ 800-322-2223; fax 805-967-7798
www.frenchcaribbean.com
Moderate

Scuba trips to The Rock and deep-sea fishing can be arranged at the sports center.

Windsurfers and wave lovers will want to stay at this large resort on five acres of the verdant La Chéry pen-

insula that juts into the sea across from Diamond Rock. Two of the adjacent beaches aren't large, but the sand is soft and white and perfect for lounging. The main beach is bigger and a sportsman's paradise. You can join in a game of sand volleyball, or take a surfboard or kayak out for a run on the waves.

Kids can sleep on day beds in their parents' room, and children's activities are offered during school holidays.

All rooms are air-conditioned and have a TV, hair dryer, safe and a private terrace that overlooks either the pool or the ocean. Three restaurants offer a range of menu choices, and there are bars and shops on-site so you never have to leave the property. However, the quaint town of Diamant is nearby, there's shuttle service to the golf course, and the hotel will arrange for tours anywhere on the island.

Sainte-Anne

A typical, very French, adults-only Club Med is located outside the village of Sainte-Anne. For information, ☎ 800-CLUB Med or contact the resort directly, ☎ 76-72-72; fax 76-72-02.

MANOIR DE BEAUREGARD
Chemin des Salines, 97227 Sainte-Anne
11 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 76-73-40; fax 76-93-24
E-mail manoir.beauregard@club-hoteliers-martinique.asso.fr
www.martinique-hotels.com
Inexpensive

Beauregard Manor is a refurbished 18th-century mansion owned and operated by the Saint-Cyr family. Set on a hill near the village of Sainte-Anne and Martinique's best beaches, the marvelous inn is furnished in antiques and surrounded by lush gardens. The main house has three large guest rooms, and the

annex has eight, including a fascinating tower room. Each is air-conditioned and has one or two four-poster beds, private bath and a view of the gardens.

A swimming pool sits adjacent to the manor house, and a separate building holds a large restaurant with a vaulted wood-beam ceiling and French doors that open out to the gardens and pool. Even if you don't stay at the inn, plan to come for the festive Créole buffet, served Sundays from noon until 5pm.

★ NOTE

Don't confuse Manoir de Beauregard with Hameau de Beauregard, a large family-style vacation village near the Les Salines beach. While the Hameau is a fine place to stay, it is far different from the refined elegance of the Manoir.

Sainte-Luce

HOTEL LES AMANDIERS (Mercure)
Quartier Désert, 97228 Sainte-Luce
117 rooms
☎ 62-32-32; fax 62-33-40
In the US: Martinique Select, ☎ 800-823-2002; fax 410-692-9579
E-mail les.amandiers@club-hoteliers-martinique.asso.fr
www.martinique-hotels.com
Inexpensive

The French hotel group Mercure is known for rooms comparable to those offered at an American Holiday Inn.

A flowering tropical garden surrounds this pastel-colored Caribbean-style resort set on a hillside near the picturesque fishing village of Sainte-Luce.

Accommodations here are clean, fairly spacious, air-conditioned and outfitted with a color TV, phone and

hair dryer. However, every room is made special by the private terrace that looks out on either the garden or swimming pool.

Qualities that move the Amandiers into the resort category include handsome landscaping, a lovely pool area that includes a fine outdoor bar, a popular Créole/International restaurant, and evening entertainment. A natural white-sand beach can be reached by walking a short distance through wild vegetation. It's not as nice as others along the south coast, but watersports are available and there's a splendid view of Diamond Rock in the distance.

HOTEL AMYRIS
Quartier Désert, 97228 Sainte-Luce
110 rooms
☎ 62-12-00; fax 62-12-10
E-mail karibea@cgit.com
Inexpensive

Amyris is yet further proof of the rapid development taking place in the southern part of the island. This new resort sits directly at the water's edge and includes four three-story contemporary structures for guests as well as a reception building. A lovely garden surrounds the Créole-style compound, which includes a restaurant, bar, swimming pool and boutique. There's a well-equipped sports center on the beach. Each air-conditioned room has three beds and two bathrooms, so they are ideal for families or friends traveling together. About half the units have kitchenettes.

VILLAGE PIERRE & VACANCES
La Pointe Philipeau, 97228 Sainte-Luce
166 apartments
☎ 62-12-62; fax 62-12-63
www.pierre-vacances.fr/location
Inexpensive

The reception staff at Village Pierre speaks English.

This new luxury hotel is highly recommended, with a few cautions. It is part of a huge French corporation that caters to French families on extended vacations. Only recently have they begun to court American tourists and, while they are doing a fine job, a few quirks will still seem quite foreign to most visitors from the United States.

For instance, you must pay a couple of francs to have your phone turned on, maid service is extra, and linens are changed only once during a week-long stay.

That said, the vacation village is superb. It's located on the beach surrounded by a lush garden with apartments grouped around a central fountain. Children get their own pool and artificial beach as well as privileges at the kids' club. Adults can arrange diving excursions and rent all types of sports equipment from the dive center on the beach. They also qualify for preferential rates at the golf course in Trois-Ilets.

The air-conditioned apartments have a living room, one or two bedrooms, one or two baths, and a covered terrace with a fully equipped kitchen. Each unit has a television. There's a restaurant and bar, and laundry facilities are located near the main swimming pool.

Le François

LES ILETS DE L'IMPERATRICE
Offshore islands
10 rooms
All meals
☎ 65-82-30; fax 45-46-17
E-mail ilets.imperatrice@club-hoteliers-martinique.asso.fr
Moderate

Two privately-owned islets just off the Atlantic coast near the little village of Le François offer the ultimate vacation escape. For the all-inclusive price of approxi-

Hammocks are provided at Les Ilets.

mately US$120 per person, guests are met at the airport in Le Lamentin and transported to Le François. From there they travel 20 minutes by private fishing boat to either Ilet Thierry or Ilet Oscar.

Each mini-paradise has a house with five guest rooms, a full-time maid and cook, and complimentary watersports. The beachfront 19th-century houses are more rustic than elegant, but guests come here for the luxury of isolation, and the extravagance of doing something unique or the indulgence of doing nothing at all.

LA FRÉGATE BLEUE
Le François, Quartier Frégate, 97220 François
Seven rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 54-54-66; fax 54-78-48
www.frenchcaribbean.com
In the US: Martinique Select, ☎ 800-823-2002; fax 410-692-9579; or Caribbean Inns, ☎ 800-633-7411; fax 803-686-7411.
Moderate

You won't find noisy kids, loud music, late-night parties or tour groups at this wonderful little hillside inn overlooking the ocean. Each of the seven spacious, sunny rooms is filled with fine antiques, including four-poster beds. In addition, each is air-conditioned and opens onto a private terrace. Breakfast is provided in the dining room, and each room has a kitchenette, but there is no restaurant.

Perhaps the best feature of the inn is the warm hospitality of proprietors Charles and Yveline de Lucy, who once ran the Leyritz Plantation. They can help you with restaurant and sightseeing suggestions if you decide to pull yourself away from the pool and abandon the seductive peace of the countryside.

Caravelle Peninsula

LA GOELETTE HOTEL
Tartane, 97220 Trinité
40 rooms
☎ 58-65-30; fax 58-25-76
E-mail karibea@cgit.com
Inexpensive

Facing the Atlantic, near the beaches of Caravelle Peninsula, this new hotels sits just outside the charming fishing village of Tartane. Stairs lead from Goélette's small three-story structures up to the larger and slightly more expensive Baie du Galion Hotel. Every air-conditioned room is a spacious junior suite with modern amenities, a small kitchen on the terrace (a common feature of Martinique hotels) and two bathrooms. This is an ideal place for families who need a little extra space and like to prepare meals and snacks for themselves. A swimming pool and tennis courts are located on the landscaped grounds.

Marigot

HABITATION LAGRANGE
Marigot, 97225 Marigot
17 rooms and suites
Full breakfast
☎ 53-60-60; fax 53-50-58
www.habitation-lagrange.com
In the US: Martinique Select, ☎ 800-823-2002; fax 410-692-9579; or Caribbean Inns, ☎ 800-633-7411; fax 803-686-7411.
Expensive

Once a plantation owner's home (*habitation*) and barn (*la grange*), Habitation Lagrange is a unique inn. It's tucked away in a lovely garden at the end of a rutted

road that cuts through jungle-like vegetation in the hills outside the village of Marigot. The slow drive up to the remote inn serves to prepare you for the transition from the outside world to the privileged, gracious life of another era.

The exquisitely restored main house dominates a seven-acre compound that was once a sugar plantation and rum distillery. You are welcomed in the reception hall on the first floor near a wood-paneled bar and cozy library. Across the hall, tall mahogany doors open into a grand dining room decorated with an original mural depicting plantation life. Here, guests enjoy candlelight dinners prepared by a French-trained chef.

One suite and three spacious guest rooms occupy the second floor. All have private baths and are individually decorated as if they are the master bedrooms of an elegant home. French doors open out to the iron-railed balcony that circles the entire second floor, and guests have the option of using ceiling fans or air-conditioning to cool their room.

Outside, a large pool is the focal point of the landscaped lawn. Nearby, former stables and a new colonial-style building have been cleverly designed to house additional guest rooms. As in the main house, each large room and private bath has modern features artfully disguised to blend with the period furnishings.

It's hard to imagine that any traveler could find fault with Lagrange. However, the nearest decent beach is at least a half-hour drive down the coast, the airport and capital are on the other side of the island, and most tourist attractions are over an hour away by car. The only diversions on the estate are a pool and tennis court – and a mountain stream, fluttering humming-

birds, sweeping views of the valley, wild orchids, rain drops in the forest, quiet nights....

Le Carbet

MADI CREOLES
Anse Latouche, Le Carbet
22 one- and two-bedroom apartments, four villas
☎ 78-26-75; fax 78-39-78
E-mail madicreoles@tropicasub.com
www.tropicalsub.com/page3.html
Inexpensive

On the northwest coast, between the remains of Mont Pelée and the excellent beach at Anse Turin, you will find this newly built hotel overlooking a sheltered cove at Anse Latouche. Divers favor this area because of the shipwrecks that lie at the bottom of the Saint-Pierre harbor and the network of dive shops that line the coast.

Each of the beachside apartments and villas is air-conditioned and features a private deck with ocean views, a fully equipped kitchenette, and satellite TV. The swimming pool and on-site car rental are enticing bonuses. The one-bedroom units comfortably accommodate two, and a group of four can spread out in the two-bedroom apartments and villas. Oversized villas open onto a large terrace with a brick oven and barbecue grill, while each of the bedrooms has a private bath.

Lionel and Françoise operate both the hotel and the adjacent dive shop, Tropicasub Plongée (☎ 78-38-03; see *Dive Centers* on page 97 for more information).

Basse-Pointe

HOTEL LA PLANTATION LEYRITZ
Basse-Pointe, 97218 Bourg Basse-Pointe
66 rooms
Full breakfast
☎ 78-53-92; fax 78-92-44
E-mail hleyritz@cgit.com
In the US: International Travel and Resorts, ☎ 800-223-9815; fax 212-476-9452.
Inexpensive

Plan to leave the Leyritz for several hours each day when busloads of tourists are on the grounds.

The 18th-century Leyritz Plantation is a historical landmark, national treasure, working banana farm, major tourist attraction and fascinating hotel. Day-trippers can have lunch and tour the grounds, but overnight guests discover the estate's deeper character.

Most guest rooms are located in buildings that once served as slave quarters or service buildings for the manor house. Others are in new cottages. Ask about staying in the former kitchen or carriage house, which sit on top of a hill and are furnished with four-poster beds and a sunny terrace with views of the ocean. The guardhouse offers absolute privacy within thick stone walls. All rooms are air-conditioned and have a TV, hair dryer and telephone. While accommodations aren't luxurious, the surroundings are enchanting.

Early in the morning or late in the afternoon, after the day-tourists have left, you will enjoy the relaxed calm in the natural gardens and around the fountain-studded pool. Sip a drink at the bar. Order a leisurely dinner in the restaurant. Stroll past the manor house that was modeled after the Leyritz family château in France. Follow the stone irrigation canal that brings mountain water down to the estate. Look out across the countryside toward Mont Pelée and the ocean.

Camping

Designated campgrounds with showers are located at **Trois-Ilets/Anse à l'Ane, Saint-Luce, Sainte-Anne**, and **Le Vauclin**. If you wish to camp on public land, you must obtain a permit from the local town hall. Beach camping is allowed during school vacations at **Grande-Anse-des-Salines** and **Cap Chevalier**. For information on camping in the forests and on beaches, contact the **Office National des Forêts**, ☎ 71-34-50; fax 68-47-43.

See the list of common menu items on page 25 for definitions of the most popular island dishes.

Best Places to Eat

Martinique is known for its many marvelous restaurants. Visitors soon fall into the island's French-inspired routine of eating well and often, so it's wise to budget a little extra for meals. The locals customarily linger over each course, which stretches lunch well into the afternoon and causes dinner to take up the entire evening. You can, of course, find fast food at casual little bars and snack stands, but why would you want to? Fine cuisine is one of Martinique's most splendid attractions.

On the Menu

French cuisine and Créole specialties highlight most menus, and many restaurants combine the best of both. Chefs create marvelous dishes using exotic critters fresh from the sea and curious produce straight from the garden. Sea urchins in a zesty sauce. Potato-like christophine

See the list of common menu items on page 25.

served au gratin. Coconut whipped into a sweet blancmange. Every meal is a gastronomic adventure.

Even those who don't care to experiment with their meals will enjoy wood-grilled Caribbean lobster, luscious sauces and cleverly prepared fruits and vegetables. Most restaurants provide menus with English translations, but often the interpretation is more confusing, or comical, than the unfamiliar words. (One menu translated coq au vin as a sauced rooster.)

Dress

Since the weather is pleasant year-round, a majority of restaurants have attractive open-air dining rooms or outdoor terraces. You will often see the term *pieds dans l'eau*, which translates as "feet in the water," but means the restaurant has tables near the sea. As you would expect, shorts and sandals are acceptable attire at such places, especially at lunch. However, uncovered swimsuits and bare feet are out of place even at fast-food and beachside restaurants. In the evening, most people dress in resort-type clothes – slacks and collared shirts for men, slacks or sundresses for women.

The restaurants listed below are considered to be among the best of more than 150 on the island. They are grouped by location, with tips on where to find bargain-priced snacks, picnic supplies and clusters of similar restaurants.

TIP

Pick up a copy of *Ti Gourmet* at the tourist office. It lists a large selection of restaurants with an English description and a sample of menu items. Restaurants pay for inclusion, so some restaurants with established reputations for fine food and service do not advertise. Use the guide, and take advantage of its discounts, but don't rely on it as your only source of information.

Pricing

Use the following scale as a guide to what a typical dinner will cost each person, excluding drinks and taxes. Lunch prices and prix fixe meals frequently are less.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Very Expensive	More than $40/46€
Expensive	$30-$40/35€-46€
Moderate	$20-$30/23€-35€
Inexpensive	$10-$20/11€-23€
Bargain	Less than $10/11€

Most eateries accept the major credit cards.

Tipping

As in France, restaurant bills include the tip – note the words *service est compris* on the menu. However, your waiter probably will not receive all of this, since management may pool gratuities or use a percentage for general restaurant expenses. It's customary to

Leave nothing if the service is poor.

leave a few coins on the table exclusively for the person who serves you. There's no set guideline, but it seems reasonable to leave a five-franc piece or one euro at an inexpensive bistro and about 5% of the total bill at a fine restaurant.

Fort-de-France

LE PLANTEUR
1 Rue de la Liberté
☎ 63-17-45
Créole
Monday-Friday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Saturday-Sunday, 7-10pm
Reservations recommended
Inexpensive

Chef Donatien has received a Gault Millau Golden Key award.

You can't beat the location of this air-conditioned second-floor restaurant near the waterfront, directly behind the tourist bureau and Air France office, overlooking Place de la Savane. Martinican chef André-Charles Donatien oversees the restaurant with the flair and skills he developed while training in Burgundy. His cooking talents began to develop in his family's kitchen in Carbet.

Try the pumpkin soup and lobster au gratin. Both are delicious.

Order the menu *découverte*, which allows you to discover several excellent dishes for one price. The assortment typically includes accras, chicken colombo and conch.

Guests receive a warm welcome and attentive service in the artistically decorated restaurant. It's popular

with boaters docked at the marina as well as shoppers in town for the day.

> **TIP**
>
> Along the street below Le Planteur, several bargain-priced spots offer sandwiches, pizza and ice cream. Try **Pain-Beurre-Chocolat** at the Tortuga Hotel or **La Taverne** in La Malmaison Hotel.

LE JOSEPHINE
15 Rue de la Liberté
☎ 63-06-82
Traditional Créole and French
Monday-Saturday, noon-2:30pm and 7-9:30pm
Closed Sundays
Reservations suggested
Moderate

Located on the second floor of Hôtel L'Impératrice overlooking the Savane park, Joséphine seems to share the moods of Napoleon's famous Martinican wife. By day, sunny and amiable with plenty of island charm. After dark, soft and romantic with an abundance of French savoir-faire. The menu leans heavily toward Créole, but there's no mistaking the French touch.

Caribbean lobster stuffed with conch, filet mignon, and crab au gratin are some of the best dishes.

The chef changes his specialties to take advantage of seafood and produce available from the market each day. For dessert, you have several choices, including simple island-made ice cream and elaborate flambéed fruit.

THE SECOND SOUFFLÉ
27 Rue de Blénac
☎ 63-44-11
Vegetarian
Monday-Friday, 11am-3:30pm
Closed weekends
Bargain

Bring cash. The Second Soufflé doesn't accept credit cards.

Another Second Soufflé is in Lamentin, ☎ 57-14-28.

The objective here appears to be creating as many novel and delicious dishes as possible for every fruit and vegetable that grows on the island. In addition to soufflés, there are quiches, salads, soups, fruit juices, cakes, tarts and more. The chef enjoys coming up with new ways to prepare everything from yams to breadfruit. Vegetarians will be impressed with the quality and variety of choices, but this place is a super discovery for anyone searching for a fresh approach to a bargain-priced lunch.

LE MARIE-SAINTE
160 Rue Victor Hugo
☎ 63-82-24
Créole
Monday-Saturday, 8am-3pm
Wednesday-Friday, 7pm-10pm
Bargain

Local downtown workers crowd into this small, simple restaurant located near the river. Stop in for a banana beignet at breakfast, then return for fresh seafood in an authentic Créole sauce for lunch. Unless you arrive early, you'll probably have to wait for a seat at one of the red-topped tables. Reservations aren't accepted and the place is extremely popular.

A prix fixe menu is offered on the three evenings per week that the restaurant is open, and it typically includes a choice of island-style specialties. Portions are generous and the food is excellent.

TIP

Coco-Loco, on Boulevard Alfassa just west of the waterfront tourist bureau, has outdoor seating and serves light lunches, ice cream and drinks – but they don't serve dinner. Live bands often provide entertainment in the evening.

LE COQ HARDI
Rue Martin Luther King
☎ 71-59-64 or 63-66-83
Steaks
Thursday-Tuesday, noon-2pm and 7-11pm
Wednesday, 7pm-11pm
Reservations suggested
Moderate

At the Hardy Rooster, chef Alphonse Sint-Ive serves up lots of red meat at this out-of-the-way spot located on a one-way street in the hills at the edge of town. Vegetarians could starve here, but lovers of rare beef will be in heaven. The best cuts are imported from France and passed quickly over an open wood grill to sizzle the outside while leaving the inside *au bleu*. Absolute perfection.

You can choose your own steak and order it with trimmings such as foie gras, mushrooms or sauce. All portions are large and served with vegetables.

Fort-de-France Suburbs

LA FONTANE
151 Route de Balata
☎ 64-28-70
French
Tuesday-Saturday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Reservations a must
Moderate/Expensive

Try the duck breast served with a mango sauce, or lamb medallions with wild mushrooms.

Set in an elegantly refurbished 18th-century house surrounded by mango trees about 2½ miles outside the capital, La Fontane is one of the most highly respected restaurants on the island. Habitually praised for its outstanding antique decor, gracious service and gourmet cuisine, this is a place you don't want to miss. Madame Amélia Berthe Zami presides over the dining room and greets each guest with a warm Caribbean smile. While this is an elegant white-tablecloth restaurant, it is not pretentious, and you will immediately feel relaxed and comfortable.

Linger over Martinican espresso and a dessert of homemade ice cream, the perfect hot-and-cold finish to a fabulous meal.

BISTROT DE LA MARNE
3 Boulevard de la Marne
☎ 72-82-20
Créole
Daily: noon-2:30pm and 7-10pm
Moderate/Expensive

Good choices are chicken in a curried coconut-milk sauce and fish with a spicy tomato topping.

Located in the Squash Hotel on the road to Schoelcher, this upscale contemporary restaurant serves a diverse menu rich in French and Antilles flavor. You can sit inside, where the decor is typical French bistro, or outdoors on the poolside garden terrace. The chef routinely changes his specialties, but try the paella, if it's available.

LA MOUINA
127 Route de la Redoute
☎ 79-34-57
French and Créole
Monday-Friday, noon-2:30pm and 7:30-9:30pm
Saturday, 7:30pm-9:30pm
Reservations recommended
Expensive

If you want to be wined and dined like a dignitary, head for the suburban hills above Fort-de-France and this colonial villa where former US and French presidents George Bush and François Mitterrand once feasted. The sleek but understated dining room occupies a balcony above a lovely garden. During the day, it is sunny and airy, but after sunset it becomes a cozy room glowing in candlelight. Owners Magdeleine and Guy Karchez specialize in polished hospitality and superb cuisine.

Menu offerings consist of French classics such as fish court-bouillon, escargots de Bourgogne, soufflé aux ecrevisses and duck à l'orange. In addition, there's a house specialty Créole plate that includes stuffed crab, crayfish and island vegetables.

For dessert, try the *l'île flottante* (floating island), which is light-as-air meringues drifting in an exquisite crème; or the French classic, raspberry charlotte.

LA BELLE EPOQUE
97 Route de Didier
☎ 64-41-19
French
Monday-Friday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Saturday, 7pm-10pm
Closed Sunday
Reservations recommended
Moderate/Expensive

You'll find this romantic little restaurant tucked away in a turn-of-the-century house in the fashionable neighborhood of Didier a short distance up highway

Specialties include a puff pastry stuffed with curried shrimp, flamed red snapper in aged rum and rack of lamb glazed with honey and lemon.

D45 outside the capital. Overseen by Martine Diacono, the elegant dining room features upholstered mahogany chairs pulled up to tables draped in white tablecloths. White plantation shutters open out to a flowering garden. It's an altogether charming place to enjoy fabulous haute cuisine. Chef Daniel Grouzet creates innovative *cuisine gastronomique*, which translates into a feast of seafood, lamb and duck.

You will dine graciously, leisurely, exquisitely. The wine list has some fine selections to accompany your meal. After dinner, you may choose to sip one of the cognac-like aged rums.

TIP

If you want a great meal while waiting for a plane at the airport, **L'Oursin Bleu** serves wonderful fresh salmon mousse with artichokes and a rich pot au feu with veal, poultry and beef. An excellent three-course prix fixe menu is priced at US$22.50. Truly great food at an unusual location.

LA PLANTATION
Jeanne-d'Arc/Le Lamentin
☎ 50-16-08
Créole/French
Monday-Friday, noon-2pm and 7:30-9:30pm;
Saturday, 7:30-9:30pm
Closed Sunday
Reservations required
Moderate/Expensive

A good map helps, but you'll still need a heap of patience and a keen sense of direction to find this *très*

fantastique restaurant in suburban Jeanne-d'Arc. From Fort-de-France, take N1 toward Le Lamentin. Turn inland (north, away from Le Lamentin) on D15 in the direction of Saint-Joseph, then watch for the Martinique Cottages. The Plantation Restaurant is part of the bungalow compound.

The popular conch salad has chunks of crab, octopus and hearts of palm in a sweet/sour vinaigrette with nuts, prunes, red peppers and carrots.

Many Martinican city dwellers like to come out to this handsome colonial retreat in the countryside to enjoy a relaxed lunch or romantic dinner. The brother-and-sister team of Jean-Marc and Peggy Arnaud, who have won awards from Gault Millau, label the food at their stylish restaurant sophisticated Créole, a term that means island ingredients prepared with French methods. The results are excellent.

Young chef Eric Voiron, who has trained with celebrated masters, creates some very innovative dishes.

Locals enjoy such things as roast pigeon with guava sauce and boiled calf's head with pressed tomato served with a sauce of virgin olive oil, balsamic vinegar and sweet peppers. You'll probably want to try the fish filet in cream sauce or the lobster drizzled with a buttery brandy sauce.

Southern Martinique

LE BOUCAUT
Novotel Carayou, Pointe du Bout, Trois-Ilets
☎ 66-04-04
French and Créole
Daily: 7:30pm-10:30pm
Reservations suggested
Moderate/Expensive

Walk past the waterfall that cascades into a huge swimming pool, over a wooden bridge and into this airy dining pavilion that overlooks the bay and the lights of Fort-de-France. Award-winning French chef

House dishes: crab baked in flaky puffed pastry; lambis (conch) pâté; tangy crayfish; lobster colombo (curry).

Paul Bocuse presides in the kitchen, where he creates magnificent dishes by seamlessly merging classic continental recipes with the island's bounty. Make reservations for a lavish theme-night buffet or order à la carte.

Enjoy the live entertainment as you savor a rich dessert and island-grown coffee, or move to the adjacent bar where you can sip an after-dinner drink (try one of the local aged rums).

LA VILLA CREOLE
Anse Mitan, Trois-Ilets
☎ 66-05-53
French and Créole
Tuesday-Saturday, noon-2pm and 7-10pm
Monday, 7-10pm
Closed Sunday
Reservations highly recommended
Moderate

At La Villa Créole, you'll find exquisite French and Créole dishes such as fresh fish filet in a caper sauce, chicken covered in a garlicky rum sauce and superb filet mignon.

Guy Bruère Dawson has become a legend in the 17 years that he has managed La Villa Créole. In fact, he was given an island-wide award for outstanding hospitality, but in person he appears a bit reserved. (Perhaps only with English-speaking guests.) That is, until he walks onto the thatch-roofed stage that sits beside a flagstone dance floor in the restaurant's tropical garden. Then, he turns on the personality, picks up his guitar, and sings until he has everyone tapping their feet and dancing under the stars.

Candlelit tables are set on a covered L-shaped patio that borders two sides of the garden, and diners enjoy their meals while Guy entertains. Meanwhile, chef Alain Bourgogne is working his magic in the kitchen.

TIP

When it's time for dessert, be sure to order a café Créole, a strong cup of island-grown coffee laced with aged rum and cream.

It's not surprising that this place is always crowded with tourists who've heard about the romantic atmosphere, delightful entertainment and superb cuisine. Dinner reservations are a must and, during the peak of winter season, you should call a day in advance.

AU POISSON D'OR
Anse Mitan, Pointe du Bout, Trois-Ilets
☎ 66-01-80
Créole
Tuesday-Sunday, noon-2:30pm and 7-10pm
Closed Monday
No reservations accepted
Moderate

Au Poisson D'Or is closed for an annual vacation the month of July.

You won't have any trouble finding the Golden Fish on the main road between Anse Mitan and Pointe du Bout. It is extremely popular for its high-quality meals offered at good prices. When you walk into the restaurant, you may feel as though you're on a South-Sea island rather than in the Caribbean. A jungle of potted plants blend with the colorful tablecloths and bamboo walls to ignite a Tahitian spark in your imagination. But the madras touches quickly bring you back to Martinique.

Sample menu: shark in a tangy red sauce; seafood callaloo; scallops in white wine; and conch marinated in spiced lime.

Owner/chef Vovonne uses old island recipes to turn fresh-catch seafood into authentic Créole dishes.

If the budget will withstand a stretch, order the grilled lobster. In the dessert category, blanc-mange coco takes the prize, but banana surprise is a close runner-up.

CHEZ FANNY

Fanny's closes Sunday evening in low tourist season and is closed for vacation the month of September.

Anse Mitan, Pointe du Bout, Trois-Ilets
☎ 66-04-34
Créole
Thursday-Tuesday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Closed Wednesday
Bargain

Fanny herself will greet you (in English) with a smile as big as the Antilles at this casual restaurant just down the road from Au Poisson d'Or. If you need a break from the sun, sit inside where it's air-conditioned. Otherwise, relax at one of the tables outside. The menu changes daily and may include steak, chicken or various seafood, depending on what Fanny and her staff find fresh and tasty at the time. Guests can help themselves from the home-style buffet or may order à la carte.

L'HEMINGWAY'S

Anse Mitan, Pointe du Bout, Trois-Ilets
☎ 66-14-24
North American buffet
Daily 10am-11pm
Bargain

L'Hemingway's is the place to eat if you're craving the tastes and aromas of home.

This hip pub-style restaurant is run by a Texan named Hemingway who, naturally, is known by the nickname Ernest. L'Hemingway's sits prominently on the water at Anse Mitan, and you can't miss its attention-getting sign and décor. Inside the ranch-like restaurant, you help yourself to the hot-and-cold buffet that features a variety of familiar American dishes. There are always several salads, a choice of meats, plenty of vegetables and some desserts. If you prefer, you also can order grilled meats à la carte.

LA LANGOUSTE
Anse Mitan, Pointe du Bout, Trois-Ilets
☎ 66-04-99
Créole
Daily: noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Inexpensive

Sit on the shady terrace to try z'habitants or chicken colombo, or sample accras and blood sausage on the prix-fixe Créole plate.

Located on the beach near the ferry landing, this well-known landmark is the place for langouste (clawless Caribbean lobster) and wood-fire grilled specialties.

Everything is dependably good, the location is ideal, and prices are reasonable.

TIP

For snacks and light meals, try **L'Embarcadère** at the ferry dock or **Délifrance** on the main road into Pointe du Bout. Get ice cream at **Boule de Neige** near Délifrance.

CHEZ JOJO
Anse à l'Ane, Trois-Ilets
☎ 68-37-43 or 68-36-89
Créole and Barbecue
Daily: noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Bargain/Inexpensive

Mama Josephine (JoJo) hustles around her popular beach restaurant making sure every guest is happy and well fed. This trendy hot-spot is known for its lively and inexpensive music feasts, especially the Friday-night dinner bashes that feature the live zouk band, Etoile Plus.

If you can't make it here on a Friday, come on Saturday for the great barbecue, or Sunday for the grilled lobster specials. Actually, there's not a bad time to drop in for an informal meal at JoJo's. Sandwiches

and daily home-style specials are popular at lunch, while mixed Créole and grilled items bring in the dinner crowds. Mama JoJo's entire family will give you a warm Caribbean welcome anytime.

TIP

Pignon sur Mer, the restaurant set in a pretty fenced yard next to Chez JoJo near the pier, serves large, carefully prepared, moderately priced Créole meals in a quieter atmosphere. Closed Sunday night and all day Monday. ☎ 68-38-37.

LE SABLE D'OR
Anse Dufour
☎ 68-62-97
Créole
Wednesday-Monday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Closed Tuesday
Bargain

The Golden Sand restaurant isn't on the beach, but the tables on its breezy little terrace offer a view of lovely Anse Dufour bay. You'll see the restaurant on a hill to the right as you enter the parking area for Anse Dufour and Anse Noir off D7 south of Anse à l'Ane. Jacques, the owner, will welcome you with a menu of innovative specialties that center on fresh seafood and Créole-spiced meats.

L'ANSE NOIRE
Anse Noire
☎ 68-62-82
Créole
Tuesday-Sunday, noon-2:30pm
Closed Monday
Bargain-Moderate

From the parking lot on the hill above Anse Dufour, walk down the steep stairs to tiny Anse Noire and the kicked-back restaurant spread under its trees. This is one of the most unusual spots on the island and, while it's a popular daytime anchorage for boats, you easily can miss it from land.

The open-air restaurant has a thatched roof, and looks like a giant Polynesian hut set down among the tall palm trees. Owners Claude Castex and Viviane Eglantine will welcome you with a smile and seat you at one of the long wooden tables. You'll have a choice of two fixed-price lunches. The 100FF/17€/$14 menu offers accras or boudin to start, followed by freshly caught grilled fish and vegetables. Dessert is included, but drinks are not. The 210FF/35€/$30 menu features grilled lobster.

FLAMBOYANT DES ISLES
Anse d'Arlet
☎ 68-67-75
Nouvelle Créole
Wednesday-Saturday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Sunday noon-3pm
Closed Tuesday
Inexpensive

True to its name, this restaurant is surrounded by poincianas that are known locally as flamboyant trees because of the flaming red flowers they ostentatiously flaunt from June to October. Of the string of waterfront eateries along the southwestern coast, this is perhaps the most pleasant. Tables on the terrace offer fantastic views of the sea, while the sleek indoor decor features black furniture and red tablecloths.

The menu at Flamboyant Des Isles offers up shrimp fritters, some scrumptious crayfish in light coconut milk, and a shark casserole.

Beignets grandmère, grandma's famous comfort food, make the ideal dessert. For a real bargain, show up for the Sunday Créole lunch buffet, priced at

50FF/8€/$6.80. It's a terrific low-cost way to sample many of the specialties.

TIP

The Diamant area is full of wonderful, usually high-priced, restaurants. However, it's possible to get a great meal in the bargain range at **Lady D** in the Plein Sud Hotel on D7 west of town, and at **Chez Lucie** on the waterfront in the center of town.

CHEZ CHRISTIANE
Rue Diamant, Le Diamant
☎ 76-49-55
Créole
Tuesday-Sunday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Closed Monday
Inexpensive

The crab soup and fried fish are dependably good bargains at Christiane's. If you want something more interesting, try the catch of the day cooked in a spicy Caribbean sauce.

You'll think this is just a rowdy bar when you pass it on the main street next to the town hall, but a charming dining room hides behind the scruffy street-front tavern. Bamboo walls, pretty artwork and lots of greenery dress up Christiane's backroom restaurant where delicious Créole dishes are served by a friendly staff.

DIAMANT LES BAINS
Highway D7 at east entrance Le Diamant
☎ 76-40-14
Seafood
Thursday-Tuesday, noon-2:30pm and 6:30-8:45pm
Closed Wednesday
Moderate

Les Bains' award-winning chef has a special talent for sauces, and the grilled lobster here is outstanding.

You will enjoy a magnificent meal on the green-and-white poolside patio of the Hôtel Diamant les Bains. During the day you'll have a view past the tropical

garden of the beach and Diamond Rock. After sunset, the terrace takes on a romantic charm. Fresh seafood dominates the menu, but you can also order filet mignon and a couple of other meat dishes.

This moderately priced restaurant should definitely be on your dining list.

TI-GRILL
Rue Justin-Roc, Le Diamant
☎ 76-11-04
Grilled seafood and steaks
Daily: noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Bargain/Inexpensive

The aroma of sizzling meat will draw you into this petit grill set up on the patio of a pretty Créole house at the corner of the main road and Rue A. et T. Duville. The menu is written on a chalkboard and usually offers a choice of fish and steaks. For dinner, you can't go wrong with the generous Super Créole plate that features a sample of several items, such as sausage, conch and langouste.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Saint Laurent is the patron saint of cooks, and it is said that the best Créole chefs keep candles lighted in his honor.

LA CASE CREOLE
Place de l'Eglise, Le Diamant
☎ 76-10-14
Créole and French
Daily: noon-3:30pm and 7-10:30pm
Reservations accepted
Moderate

Visitors staying in Le Diamant can call The Créole House for free transportation to this friendly restau-

Choices at La Case Créole include conch in a smooth vanilla sauce, couscous with seafood, and spicy stuffed crabs.

rant located on the square near the church. The decor is nothing special and the front room opens onto the street, but the food is excellent. Ask to be seated in the back and order the seafood platter that comes piled with every type of ocean creature the chef could buy from local fishermen that day.

Many meals are moderately priced, but some of the best are in the expensive range.

LE DIAMS
Place de l'Eglise, Le Diamant
☎ 76-23-28
French and Créole
Thursday-Monday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Wednesday, 7pm-10pm
Closed Tuesday
Reservations essential
Expensive

Sample items at Le Diams: fresh grouper in a vanilla sauce; fiery shrimp diablo and mahi-mahi doused in a sweet vinaigrette; filet mignon; redfish grilled with a zesty lime sauce; and big gourmet salads.

This award-winning restaurant is on the hot-spot list, so you must make reservations well in advance. It's located on the square, near the church and La Case Créole Restaurant, in the heart of Le Diamant.

TIP

If you're on a budget, come for the fixed-price lunch that includes excellent dishes in the inexpensive range.

You may want to dine here a couple of times because it's difficult to choose just one of the fabulous menu offerings.

Finish up with the blanc-mange coco, a melt-in-your-mouth coconut dessert.

RELAIS CARAIBES
La Chery, Le Diamant
☎ 76-44-65
French and gourmet Créole
Daily: noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Reservations suggested
Inexpensive/Moderate

Sample menu: redfish in escargot butter; fricassee shrimp and lobster with two sauces.

Monsieur Jean Senez, an art-loving Parisian with a passion for food and Martinique, runs this bungalow village and restaurant with the flair of a true epicurean. The attractive compound is about a mile from the highway, and the restaurant is located on a covered poolside patio facing Diamond Rock. Senez calls his restaurant's cuisine gourmet Créole, but the menu includes choices to please those who prefer classic French food as well as those who like traditional Créole.

For dessert there's the French favorite, charlotte au chocolat, or a frozen soufflé with Martinican rum sauce.

The restaurant is closed all summer so that Monsieur Senez can return to France to search out objets d'art.

RESTAURANT FREDERIC
Domaine de Belfond, Sainte-Anne
☎ 76-95-84
French and Créole
Thursday-Tuesday 7pm-10pm
Closed Wednesday
Reservations essential
Moderate/Expensive

Menu standouts include tender roasted duck and conch with coconut milk wrapped in flaky pastry.

Fréderic, a native Martinican, has returned home after many years as chef at his popular award-winning restaurant in Saint Tropez on the French

Riviera. His new venture is the current "in" spot on the island, so you'll need to make reservations well in advance to get a table.

The restaurant is set in a fashionable Créole-style house with tables in a lovely garden well off the beach in Sainte-Anne.

TIP

If you're with someone you love, ask about his famous aphrodisiac drink, Punch le Zombi de l'Amour.

MANOIR DE BEAUREGARD
Chemin des Salines, Sainte-Anne
☎ 76-73-40
Créole
Daily: noon-2pm and 7:15-10pm
Moderate

The Manoir often closes in the summer, so call in advance.

Don't confuse this beautifully restored 18th-century coral-stone mansion with the nearby luxury hotel, Le Hameau de Beauregard. The Manoir is a historical landmark full of antique furniture with a classic Créole dining room. Owner Marcelle Saint-Cry, a white-haired island beauty, has overseen the careful restoration after a fire destroyed the property in the early 1990s, and her obvious concern for perfection is evident throughout the compound.

In the large open-air dining pavilion, live music plays most nights.

Sample dishes: lobster ravioli, glazed roast pork, and conch stew.

On Sundays from noon until five, the place is full of locals and tourists who come to enjoy the buffet lunch and local band. Every meal ends with an excellent choice of desserts headed up by the outstanding coconut crème brûlée and fruit-covered ice cream crêpes.

POI ET VIRGINIE
Rue de Bord de Mer, Sainte-Anne
☎ 76-76-86
Créole/French
Wednesday-Sunday, noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Tuesday, noon-3pm
Closed Monday
Reservations recommended
Expensive

Dishes include: saffron-flavored crayfish, tuna in a bell pepper sauce, lemon chicken in coconut milk and various grilled fish and meats.

Charming place. Ceiling fans whirl above a cozy dining room decorated with wicker furniture, fresh flowers, bamboo walls and bright Haitian folk art. Friendly waitresses dressed in madras plaid add to the island ambience at this seaside restaurant facing the jetty in the center of town. Call ahead or arrive early to secure a table that sits right above the water on a terrace built into the sand. On a clear day, you can see all the way to Saint Lucia.

TIP

Many first-time customers don't know about the outstanding seafood platter for two. The kitchen needs 24-hour notice to prepare this fabulous feast, and tourists often are disappointed that they can't order it on the spot. Now that you know, call a day ahead to make your request, and arrive hungry. It's a splurge at 590FF/98€/$83, but dinner for two at most top-quality places is in this range.

The menu is large and includes lots of seafood, such as the popular lobster and crab salad specialty.

A live band entertains on Friday nights.

Great dishes: seafood quiche, crayfish, curries, vegetables au gratin.

This open-air eatery is on the beach-to-market road.

L'HIPPOCAMPE
Grand Anse
☎ 68-65-80 or 68-69-78
Creative Créole
Daily: noon-10pm
Moderate

Saturday night's lobster feast with live entertainment draws a crowd at Hippocampe. It's not on the beach, but the tranquil terrace surrounded by a tangle of greenery is the next best thing.

You'll want to start with the fresh-made punch planteur (some places pour pre-mixed planter's punch from a bottle) and finish up with the superb fruit tart.

Northeastern Martinique

LEYRITZ PLANTATION
Basse-Pointe
☎ 78-53-92
Country Créole/West Indian
Daily: 12:30pm-2pm and 7:30-9pm
Reservations recommended
Moderate

Some readers may remember Presidents Gerald Ford and Valéry G. d'Estaing eating here in the 1970s.

When a cruise ship is in port, you don't want to be here. It's a popular stop on the day-tour circuit, and the crowds can be unappetizing. Other days, and most evenings, this restored 18th-century plantation with views of Mont Pelée is *magnifique*. Do the tourist exploration, then settle in for a fine meal. The fixed-price lunch menu is a good value and features stuffed crab appetizers, a main course served with rice and island vegetables, and a freshly made dessert.

The plantation offers a dramatic dinner setting. A water canal from the original rum distillery still runs through the dining room, and the sound of the water combines with the high-beamed ceiling, old stone

walls and flagstone floors to create a memorable setting. Start with one of the outstanding soups, then choose chicken, pork, or lamb colombo (curry) served with fresh vegetables. You'll feel as though you're master of the estate.

CHEZ MALLY
2 Ruelle Saint-Jean, Basse-Pointe
☎ 78-51-18
Créole
Daily: noon-3pm
Bargain

Legendary Mally Edjam is retired, and Martine Hugé is the gracious new owner, but old friends still stop by for one of Mally's smiles. This is one of the last home-restaurants where guests can enjoy the Créole delicacy *z'habitants*, large, freshwater, caught-in-the-river crayfish. You have to come looking for this off-the-tourist-track restaurant lodged in Mally's simple home, but you'll be glad for the experience. Come with an adventurous spirit, and be prepared to use the French food glossary on page 25. If you don't order crayfish, try the excellent lobster vinaigrette, and save room for a piece of homemade coconut cake topped with *confiture* (jam).

Chez Mally is closed from mid-July until mid-August.

POINTE NORD
Macouba, Route de la Trace
☎ 78-56-56
Home-style Créole
Daily: noon-3pm; closed Monday
Reservations required
Inexpensive/Moderate

Built on the ruins of Perpigna rum distillery on the far northern coast, this down-to-earth café has good views of Dominica on clear days. Locals and tourists

The crayfish-mussel étouffée and blaff (a whole fish) are popular main dishes, and no one can resist the fruit mousse for dessert.

with inside information fill the place, especially on weekends, to chow down on sure-'nuff Caribbean soul food. Seafood is the specialty, and the perfect meal starts with a planter's punch and mixed-grill appetizers.

HABITATION LAGRANGE
Marigot
☎ 53-60-60
Haute Créole
Daily: noon-2pm and 7pm-9pm
Reservations required
Expensive

This is the most authentic and unique retreat on the island. You will feel as though you've squeezed through a rough spot in the time barrier and emerged into an era when plantation society was in its prime. Actually, the rough spot is simply a jaw-jolting ride up the narrow rutted road that leads to this splendid estate. The plantation society, however, is as real as it can be in this millennium. Jean-Louis de Lucy has turned an 18th-century mansion into a deluxe hotel and restaurant where meals are inspired by the grand tables of France, but composed of local products seasoned with island spices.

Arrive for dinner in time to sit on the terrace beside the pool to enjoy an apéritif. Then move into the candle lighted dining room dominated by a pastel mural of genteel plantation life in the good old days. The tables will be set with fresh flowers, luxury linens, china, crystal and silver. Dinner will be a pleasing blend of French and Créole recipes which may include accras to start, followed by sautéed fish with an exquisite island-spiced French sauce and an inventive vegetable side dish. After dessert, you'll retire to the library to sip dark aged rum. Throughout, the service will be smooth, gracious and charming.

LA DECOUVERTE
Route de Marigot, Sainte-Marie
☎ 69-44-04
Créole
Daily: noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Reservations required for dinner
Moderate

Many locals and visitors come to this hard-to-find place just to see Tatie Simone Adelise, the longtime proprietress, cook and one-woman welcoming committee. She's a jolly, marvelously efficient person who takes pride in feeding her guests delicious food at modest prices.

Find Tatie Simone bustling about her folksy restaurant on a steep dirt road that turns off the Sainte-Marie-to-Marigot highway and heads down to Foret-la-Philippe and the sea. Cows roam on nearby land, and guests often sit on the front porch or under the shade trees to enjoy the countryside ambience. Tatie Simone greets everyone, takes their order, then hustles back to the kitchen to prepare her specialties. One of her most outstanding creations is a feast of many colors, which entails couscous piled high with lobster, shrimp, clams, sea urchin, octopus (and any other fresh seafood she may have on hand) topped with raisins, onions, peppers and fresh herbs. Other popular dishes include roasted snapper and pâte en pot, a vegetable broth with sea urchins.

Many say the accras with cod, shrimp and boudin here are the best on the island.

LE COLIBRI
Morne des Esses
☎ 69-91-95
West Indian
Tuesday-Sunday, noon-3pm and 7-11pm
Closed Monday
Reservations suggested
Moderate

Le Colibri (the hummingbird) is a casual, at-home family restaurant run by award-winning chef

Le Colibri has an excellent wine list, and be sure to save room for coconut flan for dessert.

Clothilde Paladino and her daughter. The pretty dining room sits on a hill and has large glass windows that allow a spectacular view of the sea.

TIP

Call ahead to request a table on the verandah or near a window, so that you don't get trapped sitting at a table with a view of the kitchen. In fact, it's a good idea to make reservations anytime, because the restaurant is popular with residents who drive up from Fort-de-France.

The specialty here is a labor-intensive feast called buisson d'écrevisses, which is six huge crayfish served with a spicy tomato sauce and decorated with fresh flowers. Islanders come for the stuffed pigeon and suckling pig, but other choices include coquilles St.-Jacques, conch quiche and fish soup.

Northwestern Martinique

LE TROU CRABE
Le Coin, Le Carbet
☎ 78-04-34
Seafood
Monday-Saturday, 11:30am-3pm and 7-10pm
Sunday, 11:30am-3pm
Reservations recommended
Moderate

As you enter Carbet, look for this elegantly casual restaurant right on the beach. It's run by Corinne and Frederic D'Orazio, a couple from Lyon, France. The shady garden terrace offers a fantastic view of colorful sailboats passing only a few feet away, and a 2,000-

gallon aquarium gives you get a glimpse of life under the sea. Make a reservation for Saturday night when a band plays, and Donzeau, the D'Orazio's French chef, prepares his special lobster feast. If you can't make it on Saturday, try Thursday, when mussels and oysters arrive fresh from France. You can stop by anytime, without reservations, to enjoy a drink or ice cream from the bar menu.

Le Trou Crabe is closed in June and September for an annual vacation.

LE FROMAGER
Morne Abel, Saint-Pierre
☎ 78-19-07
French/Créole
Daily: noon-2:30
Dinner by reservation only starting at 7:30pm
Moderate

Located in the hills above Saint Pierre on the road to Fond-Saint-Denis, this beautiful award-winning restaurant run by the friendly Demant family rewards guests with scrumptious meals and a spectacular panorama of the bay below Mont Pelée. The menu changes daily.

Favorites at Le Fromager: duck with pineapple sauce, conch stew and grilled lobster. The chef offers a delicious daily special for 100FF/17€/$14.

The dining room is nicely decorated with white-lace tablecloths and white wicker furniture, contrasting with the rich colors of the wooden floor, rum barrels and potted plants. You can eat indoors or outside on the terrace, but avoid times when bus tours overrun the place and the staff is hurried. Call ahead to ask if they expect a large group so that you won't miss the customary charming service and warm hospitality.

HABITATION CERON
Le Prêcheur, Saint-Pierre
☎ 52-96-03
Créole
Daily 9:30am-5pm
Moderate

You'll want to spend a good part of the day at this flower-filled 17th-century plantation that has been

Céron has won awards for its historic restoration and for its innovative eco-restaurant that uses produce grown on the grounds.

restored by the des Grottes family. Take a tour of the estate, then stop at the restaurant to enjoy a lunch of fresh-caught crayfish from the estate pond.

The rustic dining room sits near the river and offers two fixed-price menus. Don't miss this opportunity to enjoy a well-priced and delicious meal in a unique location.

Martinique A-Z

ATMs

There are 24-hour ATMs at **Lamentin Airport** and at branches of the **Crédit Agricole** bank in major cities. You may use a bank card to withdraw cash at any machine with the Interac, Cirrus or Plus logos.

Banking

The area code for Martinique is 596. When calling from the US, dial 011 + 596 (area code) + 596 (local exchange) + the six-digit number.

Banks are open Monday through Friday from 8am to noon and 2:30-4:30pm. They close for the afternoon on any day preceding a public holiday. Major banks in Fort-de-France are:

Banque Nationale de Paris (BNP)
72 Avenure des Caraïbes

Crédit Agricole
106 Boulevard du Général-de-Gaulle
55 rue Schoelcher
58 rue Ernest-Deproge

Banque des Antilles Françaises (BDAF)
34 rue Lamartine

You can exchange money at **Change Caraïbes**, 4 rue Ernest-Deproge, and **Change Point**, 14 rue Victor-Hugo.

Books & Maps

Anyone touring the waters around Martinique or island-hopping by boat will want to pick up a copy of ***Sailors Guide to the Windward Islands***, by Chris Doyle, published by Chris Doyle Publishing, ☎ 813-733-5322; fax 813-734-8179.

Free maps are easily attainable from tourist offices, car rental agencies and hotels. The **Institut Géographique National's** map number 511 is an excellent resource sold at stores around the island for 57F. (This is the same map given out free by major car rental agencies.)

Climate

The air temperature on Martinique averages 86°F, and the water is a pleasant 77-82°F all year. Humidity averages 77%, with a dry season, ***carême***, running from December to May, and a rainy season, ***hivernage*** (wintering), running between June and November. During the rainy season, heavy downpours occur often and the temperature is higher. However, the heat is tempered by ***alizés***, refreshing trade winds that blow from the east and northeast. The sun shines for part of most days year-round, and the Caribbean side is drier than the Atlantic coast. Occasional hurricanes occur in the area from late August through October.

Credit Cards

Most banks, ATM machines, hotels and restaurants accept major credit cards. However, small businesses, especially in outlying villages, may not be equipped to handle plastic.

Currency

Martinique's official currency is the French franc, which fluctuates daily, but exchanges at about 7.5FF/1.16€ = US$1. On January 1, 2002, the euro will replace the franc. American dollars are accepted, but rarely in small businesses or in remote locations.

Drinking Water

Tap water is safe to drink, but never consume it from rivers or lakes because of the danger of parasites (*bilharzia*). Bottled water is readily available, and you will usually be served (and charged for) it in restaurants unless you ask for *l'eau du robinet* (tap water).

Electricity

Electricity is 220 volts AC, 50 cycles, and most outlets have French-style outlets. You'll need a transformer to convert electricity and a plug adapter in order to operate appliances made for use in the United States.

Emergencies

Police	☎ 17
Fire Department	☎ 18
Medical Emergencies	☎ 75-15-15
Sea Rescue	☎ 71-92-92

Non-emergency calls to police should be made to ☎ 55-30-00 in Fort-de-France.

Hospitals

In an emergency, go to **Hôpital Pierre Zobda Quitman** in Lamentin, ☎ 75-15-15.

Internet Resources

Martinique Promotion Bureau maintains an English-language site at www.martinique.org.

Other helpful sites include:

www.frenchcaribbean.com
www.where2stay.com
www.cieux.com
www.fwinet.com

Language

The official language is French, but many people in tourist locations also speak English. Most residents, especially in small villages, also speak Créole patois.

Marriage Requirements

One of the two people wishing to marry must live on the island for at least a month and show a residency card. Both must show birth certificates, "a certificate of good conduct," which includes proof of being single, a medical certificate with proof of a clean blood test and a French translation of any documents written in English.

Political Status

Martinique became a *département d'outre-mer Français* (overseas department) in 1946. Today it is an official *région* of France and is represented in the French Parliament by four elected deputies and two senators.

Telephone

You will need a telephone card, *télécarte,* to make a local or long-distance call on Martinique. Buy the cards at any post office or newspaper stand for either 37FF/6€/$5 or 89FF/15€/$13, depending on the length of calling time you require.

For information, ☎ 12.

Local calls require 596 plus the six-digit number.

The area code for Martinique is 596. When calling from the United States, dial 011 + 596 + 596 (local exchange), then the six-digit local number. To call the United States from Martinique, dial 19 + 1 + area code + local number.

Time

Martinique is on **Atlantic time** year-round. The time is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time and the same as Eastern Daylight Time.

Most schedules use a 24-hour clock, so a ferry leaving at three in the afternoon will list its departure as 15:00.

The sun rises between 5am and 6am and sets between 6pm and 6:30pm year-round.

Tourist Information

The main tourist office is:

Office Départemental du Tourisme de la Martinique
Rue Ernest Deproge-Bord de Mer
B.P. 520, 97200 Fort-de-France
Martinique, FWI (French West Indies)
☎ 63-79-60; fax 73-66-93

In the United States:

Martinique Promotion and Development Bureau
444 Madison Avenue, 16th Floor
New York, NY 10022
☎ 212-838-7855; fax 212-838-7855
www.martinique.org

Guadeloupe & the Outer Islands

Overview

Guadeloupe is an archipelago in the center of the Lesser Antilles. The main island is actually two irregular ovals hinged together like an open oyster shell. Smaller outer islands float nearby like spilled pearls in the turquoise sea.

Guadeloupe is called the Butterfly Island because of its shape.

Grande-Terre, the eastern half of the shell, is basically a flat field of lush sugarcane dotted with colorful towns and rimmed by long, sandy beaches. **Basse-Terre** is a mountainous forest marked by waterfalls, rivers, hot springs and a volcano. The two are joined by a bridge over the Rivière-Salée, a channel that connects the Caribbean Sea and Atlantic Ocean.

Grande-Terre & Basse-Terre

Why, you may wonder, is the smaller, flatter half of the island called Grande-Terre (big land), and the larger, mountainous half called Basse-Terre (low land)? The only theory that makes sense is that early sailors, with their obligatory obsession for wind, noticed that northeastern trade winds blew *grande* when they hit the flat eastern shore, but *basse* when they pushed over the mountains in the west.

The less developed islands of **Marie-Galante**, **Les Saintes** and **La Désirade** stretch out along the double island's southern shore. Les Saintes is actually a collection of mini-islands that are rocky and steep like Basse-Terre. Marie-Galante is flatter and similar to Grande-Terre topographically. La Désirade is a long, narrow, rugged rock with one road, only a few residents and limited facilities – a nature-lover's dream.

Most visitors choose to stay on the main island and take day-trips or overnight excurions to the outer islands.

TIP

Since Guadeloupe covers 700 square miles (560 of them on the main island), it's a good idea to choose your home base according to your favorite activity or most important amenities.

Grande-Terre and Basse-Terre are connected by a highway that bridges the channel between them, so driving from one to the other is simple. Boats leave for the outer islands from four towns on the main island's southern coast, and they are the quickest and least expensive way to island-hop. Air Caraïbes flies daily from the international airport near Pointe-à-Pitre to Les Saintes, Marie-Galante and La Désirade.

The road system is quite good, but because the routes are mostly two-lane, even short drives can take time.

Because the island is so diverse, in a single day you can enjoy a drive along both the jagged coast of the wild Atlantic and the pristine coves of the calm Caribbean – or hike uphill into the rain forest then nap on a sunny beach.

Several towns on both Basse-Terre and Grande-Terre offer gourmet dining, lively entertainment and world-class lodging. Because the archipelago is a legitimate

région of France, you will enjoy French-style comfort and cuisine with a tropical twist wherever you stay. This tropical twist is one of Guadeloupe's many charms. Shops and offices close between noon and 2 o'clock for a leisurely gourmet lunch with wine, as they typically do all over Europe. But, out on the streets, the music has a decidedly African beat. The women wear madras headdresses as they do in India, and the aroma of West Indies spices permeates the air.

Another appealing quality is the stable economy that makes Guadeloupe neither rich nor poor. Towns aren't filled with tourist-badgering hustlers or begging street people. At the same time, the islanders are friendly, and a simple "bonjour" breaks the language barrier. There aren't a lot of fancy boutiques or glitzy nightspots, but everyone seems to have plenty of what they need.

A Brief History

About a century before Christopher Columbus stopped in Guadeloupe looking for fresh water, Amerindians known as **Caribs** overran the island and drove out the Arawaks, a peaceful tribe of skilled fishermen. The Caribs called their newly seized home *Karukera,* meaning island of beautiful waters.

Discovery by Columbus

In 1493, when Columbus spotted the island during his second voyage, he officially named it Santa Maria de Guadeloupe de Estremadura, after a favorite monastery in Spain. Thankfully, no one must mumble that

mouthful today because the Spanish were never successful in settling the island. When the French arrived in 1635, they were content to call the island simply *Guadeloupe* (silent "e").

The Carib Indians

The Caribs were descendants of the Galibis of South America. Early settlers, including Columbus, mangled the tribe's name and pronounced it *Canibalis*, which is the origin of the English word cannibal. Members of this tribe were ferocious warriors who were rumored to cook and eat the flesh of their enemies. These rumors were never confirmed, but the Caribs did enjoy carving designs into their own skin during ceremonial observances, and that quirk alone may have been enough to trigger European imaginations.

Arrival of the Spanish & the French

Spanish explorers tried to settle Guadeloupe, but the Carib inhabitants repeatedly fought them back. In 1635, a French company known as *Compagnie des Iles d'Amérique* successfully established a colony on the island and eventually forged a peace agreement with the Caribs.

Sugar Plantations & Slavery

Sugar was the match that ignited the economic boom on Guadeloupe. Europeans developed a sweet tooth in the mid 1600s and French farmers brought slaves from western Africa to the islands to work the fertile

fields and feed Europe's insatiable appetite. French plantation owners got rich. Europeans enjoyed their treats. Guadeloupe thrived. Black slaves soon outnumbered white colonists.

The island became an ideal stage for local discontent and English-French territorial battles. Racial problems continued whether England or France had control, and a short reign of terror broke out during the French Revolution when islanders divided between royalists and republicans.

Back-and-forth governments resulted in the abolition and reinstatement of slavery several times between 1789 and 1848. British-backed slavery was abolished in 1794 when **Victor Hugues**, a black French nationalist, arrived on the island, armed the slaves, and killed more than 1,000 colonists – many of them plantation owners.

Napoleon Bonaparte, in a characteristic power play, sent representatives to Guadeloupe in 1802 to squelch hostilities, restore the pre-revolutionary government, and reestablish slavery. As a result, the island became the most prosperous in the West Indies, and England coveted it jealously.

In 1816, France gained lasting sovereignty over Guadeloupe in the **Treaty of Vienna**. Thirty-two years later, **Victor Schoelcher**, a Frenchman, led a successful campaign to permanently abolish slavery. (Indentured servants from India were brought in to keep the plantations productive.)

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Schoelcher Day is a public holiday celebrated each July, and the Musée Schoelcher near the market in Pointe-à-Pitre was built to honor him.

The 20th Century

Islanders gained full benefits granted all French citizens on March 19, 1946 when Guadeloupe became an official overseas *département* of France. In 1974, the island was upgraded to a French *région,* which is governed by an appointed prefect and several elected officials.

Getting to Guadeloupe

Citizens of the United States may enter and stay up to three months. They must show a valid passport or other proof of citizenship (which can be an expired passport up to five years out of date) plus a government-approved photo ID or an official birth certificate. All visitors must show a return or onward ticket off the island.

Arriving By Air

American Eagle Airlines flies ATR turboprops daily from San Juan, Puerto Rico to **Aéroport Pole Caraïbes** near Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe. Various carriers provide jet service to San Juan from gateway cities in North America. In addition, **Air France** has jet service to the island from Miami on Tuesday and Saturday.

Canadian travelers can fly nonstop from Montreal to Guadeloupe on Saturday on **Air Canada**. European flights are operated daily by **Air France** or **AOM French Airlines** out of Paris.

Air Caraïbes (formerly AirGuadeloupe/Air Martinique) connects Pointe-à-Pitre with San Juan, Martinique, and all the islands in the Guadeloupe archipelago with daily service.

For island-hopping outside the French islands, call **BWIA** or **LIAT**. They have flights throughout most of the Caribbean, and you can often arrange free stopovers on islands where the airplane makes intermediary landings.

To call Guadeloupe from outside, dial 011-590-590, then the number given in this guide; to call within the island, dial 590, then the number.

AIRLINE INFORMATION	
International & Inter-island Carriers	
Air France	☎ 21-13-03; US ☎ 800-237-2747
Air Canada	☎ 21-12-77
American Eagle	☎ 21-13-66; US ☎ 800-433-7300
AOM French Airlines	☎ 21-16-19
Air Caraïbes	☎ 82-47-00; fax 82-47-48; www.aircaraibes.com
BWIA	☎ 800-538-2942; www.bwee.com
LIAT	☎ 21-13-93; US ☎ 800-468-0482; www.liat.com

Flight arrival information is available at ☎ 90-32-32. Check departures at 90-34-34.

Aéroport Pole Caraïbes (☎ 21-14-72) is 3½ miles from Pointe-à-Pitre. It has a modern, well-equipped terminal with information booths, car rental stands, a restaurant and some small shops. In addition, there is a 24-hour currency-exchange ATM machine, and a branch of the Crédit Agricole bank is open 8am-noon and 2-4pm.

There is no departure tax.

Arriving By Sea

Ferry Service

All prices are approximate.

Boats link Guadeloupe's main coastal towns with Marie-Galante, Les Saintes and La Désirade at a round-trip cost of about 170FF/28€/$25. The trips are short, but if the sea is rough, it may seem to take forever.

See "Getting There" for specifics about the ferry services from Guadeloupe.

L'Express des Iles (☎ 83-12-45) provides modern, 300-passenger catamaran service daily from Pointe-à-Pitre to Martinique for around 325FF/54€/$47 one-way, and several times weekly to both Dominica and Saint Lucia for about 478FF/80€/$68 one way. The trip to Martinique takes approximately three hours. Dominica is between the two French islands and only an hour and forty-five minutes by boat. Saint Lucia requires a 5½-hour trip. Make reservations at least a day in advance and buy tickets at the departure marina or from a tour agency in town.

Cruise Ships

Cruise ships dock at **Centre Saint-John Perse** near downtown Pointe-à-Pitre. Passengers have a short walk from the dock to the tourist information office, shops, restaurants, museums and the colorful outdoor market. Taxis and tour operators meet ships to take visitors around the city, to beaches on the south shore, or over to Basse-Terre's national park and protected rain forest reserve.

Private Boats

Visitors who arrive by private boat may dock at the marinas in **Bas-du-Fort, Saint-François** or **Rivière-Sens**. Marina de Bas-du-Fort has additional facilities such as sanitation, electricity, and maintenance.

Fuel, water and ice are available at all three marinas.

Getting Around

Car Rentals

Since Guadeloupe has an excellent road system, you will see and enjoy more of the island if you rent a car. All you need is a valid driver's license (an international permit is required for visits of more than 20 days) and insurance.

Driving is on the right side. The speed limit is 110kmh/66mph on multi-lane highways, and 80kmh/48mph on two-lane highways.

TIP

Sign up for the company's insurance coverage unless you're positive your credit card or personal insurance is effective outside the United States.

Rates

Weekly prices are less expensive than daily rates, and prepaid or guaranteed advance reservations usually cost less than on-the-spot rentals. Cars may be in

short supply during peak season, so to insure that the car you want is available, reserve in advance through a toll-free number before you leave the US. Smaller local agencies advertise appealing rates, so you may want to take a chance on renting from them after you reach Guadeloupe, especially if you plan to keep the car less than a week. However, be sure that you understand any additional charges that may be added to the base rate, and be willing to put up with a hassle (in French) if something goes wrong.

To call Guadeloupe from outside the country, dial 011-590-590, then the number given in this guide; to call within the island, dial 590, then the number.

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES	
North American Companies	
Avis	☎ 800-331-1084; local 21-13-54
Hertz	☎ 800-654-3001; local 84-57-94
Budget	☎ 800-527-0700; local 90-26-37
Euro/Dollar	☎ 800-800-1000; local 82-75-42
Thrifty	☎ 800-367-2277; local 20-13-60
Local Companies	
Soltour	☎ 83-39-15
Transcar	☎ 91-64-80; fax 83-01-40
Zami	☎ 83-94-32; fax 89-09-48
Pop's Car	☎ 83-39-73

Cautions

Renting a car is not for everyone. Most cars are small, have manual transmission and no air-conditioning. You'll pay extra – a lot extra – for larger vehicles with automatic transmission and A/C.

TIP

If you aren't comfortable driving, stick with taxis and limit your independent sightseeing.

In addition to being comfortable with your car, you must also be comfortable with the local drivers. You'll see driving schools all over the island, and students must pass the same test given to all new drivers in France in order to get a license on Guadeloupe. However, the locals drive fast and have little tolerance for tourists who cruise along at sightseeing speed on two-lane highways. If you can't keep up or can't ignore the blaring horns behind you, you may want to give up the independence of a rental car.

Buses

Public buses shuttle around the island Monday through Saturday from 5am until 6pm, connecting most villages with Pointe-à-Pitre. No one pretends there is a reliable schedule, and the buses can be very crowded and noisy, but you can't beat the price. If you want to give the system a try, it helps to speak French. However, destinations are displayed on the outside of the buses, so you can manage by simply recognizing the name of the place you want to visit.

Stops are marked by blue signs marked *Arrêt-Bus* with a picture of a bus, but most drivers will take on passengers who flag them down anywhere along the route. As the bus fills, jumpseats lower into every available space, so it's best to grab a seat near a door.

Backpackers will love soaking up local culture and mingling with Guadeloupians as they chug along the winding roads between towns.

Be prepared to pay with exact change or small bills as you get off at your stop.

Fares are inexpensive. A trip from the airport into nearby Pointe-à-Pitre runs about 5FF/1€/85¢, and a two-hour ride all the way to the capital city of Basse-Terre on the west coast is just 30FF/18€/$15. If you have plenty of time and no luggage, a public bus is the best ride on Guadeloupe.

Taxis

Taxis are metered, regulated by the government, and allowed to increase rates by 40% after 9pm and all day Sundays and holidays. This is the law. Reality is sometimes different.

TIP

Be sure to agree on a fixed fare or mileage rate along the shortest route before you get into the cab.

Daytime charges from the airport into Pointe-à-Pitre Monday through Saturday should run about 80FF/13€/$11. Expect to pay between 100FF/17€/$14 and 300FF/50€/$43 to go to the beach resorts near Gosier, Sainte-Anne and Saint-François.

You'll find taxi stands outside the airport, near cruise docks and along main roads in the largest cities. Most resorts have drivers standing by for guests, and restaurants will call a cab for you when they bring the bill at the end of your meal.

If you wish to call a taxi yourself, try: **Taxis Aéroport**, ☎ 82-00-00; **CDL Europe Taxis**, ☎ 20-74-74; or **SOS Taxis**, ☎ 83-63-94.

Taxi Tours

A few Guadeloupean taxi drivers speak excellent English and conduct customized sightseeing tours. This is particularly economical for groups and can be quite efficient for individuals with specific interests. Ask the concierge at your hotel or someone at the tourist office to suggest an English-speaking driver with tour experience. A 10% tip is standard, and most tourists treat their driver to meals and snacks during the day.

See Boat Excursions, page 259, for a list of companies that provide inter-island transportation.

Festivals, Events & Holidays

Guadeloupe is an island of strong traditions, and citizens take every opportunity to celebrate their mixed cultures.

Fête des Cuisinières

Fête des Cuisinières, or Festival of Women Cooks, is perhaps the island's most colorful celebration. Every August, islanders honor Saint Laurent, the patron saint of cooks, with a day-long feast in Pointe-à-Pitre – and tourists are invited. The day begins with mass at the Catholic church, lest anyone forget the reason for the holiday, and continues with a five-hour feed in a nearby schoolyard. Island women dress in traditional Créole costumes with madras headdress and plenty of jewelry. They parade to the school carrying baskets of flowers and produce.

Major Annual Events

Alexander Richardson in the US, ☎ 732-302-1223, is a good source of information about celebrations on Guadeloupe.

If you want to be in Guadeloupe for a specific cultural event, call the **Guadeloupe Visitor Information Line** at ☎ 1-888-448-2335 for the dates of this year's events.

Carnival – January through Ash Wednesday.

Sailing Regattas – last weeks of March and April.

Catamaran Championship – last week of May.

Cycling Tour of Guadeloupe – early August.

Fête des Cuisinières – middle of August.

Festival of Créole Music – entire month of November.

International Jazz Festival – early December.

Carnival

Carnival, a tempestuous festivity leading into the abstinence of Lent, starts with **La Fête des Rois** on Epiphany Sunday in January. Every town hosts some sort of celebration with costumes, decorations, parade floats and an abundance of rich food served up with French wine.

Two weekends before Ash Wednesday, Pointe-à-Pitre holds the official election for Carnival Prince and Princess, and the next weekend all business comes to a halt. The following five days and nights are a frenzy of parades, street dances and parties. While Carnival usually ends on Shrove Tuesday, it stretches through an extra day on Guadeloupe. When Lent arrives, everyone dresses in black and white, King Carnival is burned on a ceremonial funeral pyre, and a final torchlight parade winds through the streets.

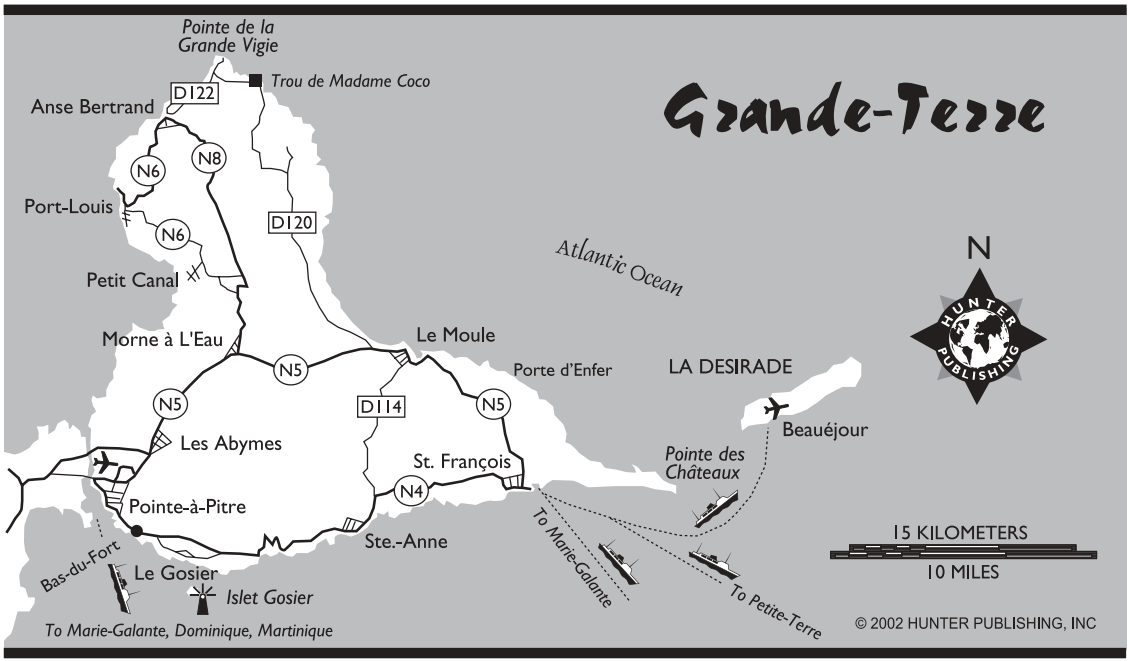
Public & Religious Holidays

Banks and most businesses close on these public holidays:

January 1 . . . . . New Year's Day
May 1 . . . . . Labor Day
May 8 . . . . . Armistice Day (World War II)
May 27. . . . . Abolition of Slavery Day
July 14. . . . . Bastille Day
July 21. . . . . Victor Schoelcher Day
August 15 . . . . . Feast of the Assumption
November 1. . . . . All Saints' Day
November 11 . . . . . Armistice Day (World War I)
December 25. . . . . Christmas Day

Variable religious holidays observed by public closings:

Shrove Tuesday . . . . . Mardi Gras
Ash Wednesday . . . . . variable
Easter Sunday and Monday . . . . . variable
Ascension Day . . . . . variable
Whitsun - Pentecost . . . . . (the 7th Sunday after Easter)


Grande-Terre
Pointe de la Grande Vigie
Trou de Madame Coco
Anse Bertrand
D122
N6
N8
Port-Louis
N6
D120
Petit Canal
Morne à L'Eau
N5
Le Moule
Atlantic Ocean
Porte d'Enfer
LA DESIRADE
N5
D114
N5
Les Abymes
Beauéjour
Pointe des Châteaux
St. François
N4
Pointe-à-Pitre
Ste.-Anne
To Marie-Galante
To Petite-Terre
Bas-du-Fort
Le Gosier
Islet Gosier
To Marie-Galante, Dominique, Martinique
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
15 KILOMETERS
10 MILES
© 2002 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

Grande-Terre & Basse-Terre

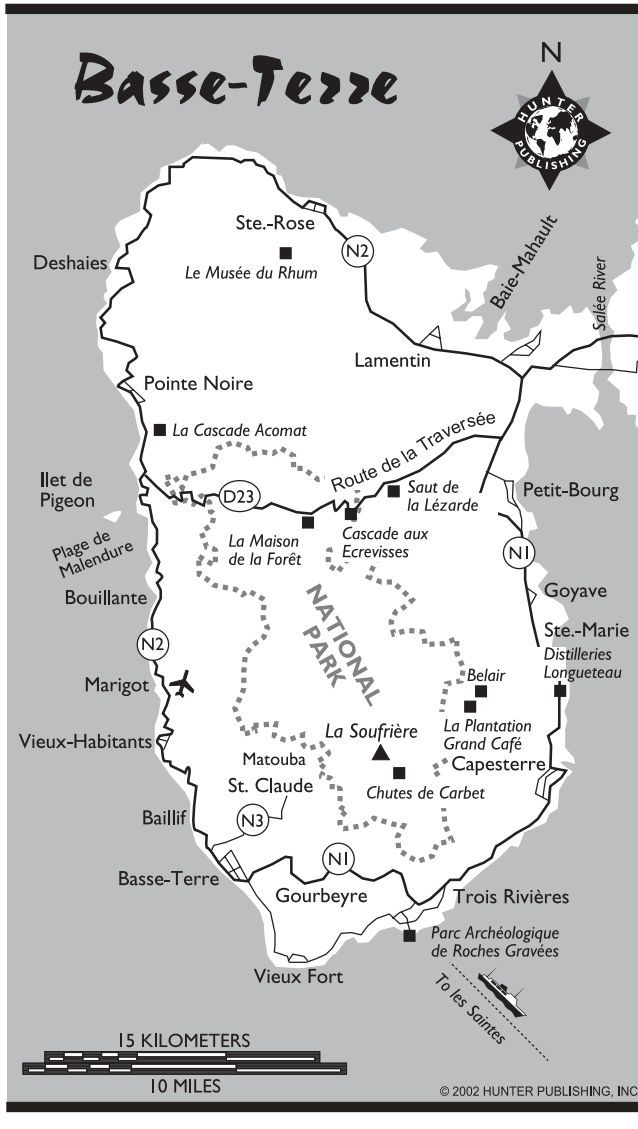
Exploring the Islands

Often referred to as the flat half, Grande-Terre is actually a separate island quite distinct from its western mate, Basse-Terre. The **Rivière-Salée** separates Grande from Basse, and east of this narrow strip of water, the beach-fringed terrain is almost level.

Pointe-à-Pitre is the principal city and commercial hub of Guadeloupe, and the natural reference point for all other locations on the island. It sits snugly in the niche between Grande and Basse in the watery **Petit Cul-de-Sac Marin** just south of Rivière-Salée. Cruise ships dock at its harbor, and the international airport is two miles from the city limits. Of all the picturesque cities on the island, it is the most like a modern port town on the French Riviera.

From Pointe-à-Pitre, Grande-Terre sprawls east over more than 218 square miles like a ragged, palm-lined triangle. An excellent system of national highways (*Routes Nationales*) connects the bustling central port with tranquil colonial villages, tropical countryside and shady beaches.

Most of Grande-Terre's resorts are located along the southern coast between **Gosier** and **Saint-François**. The eastern tip, **Pointe des Châteaux**, is a national park marked by a wooden cross sitting high on a hill


Basse-Terre
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Ste.-Rose
Le Musée du Rhum
N2
Deshaies
Baie-Mahault
Salée River
Lamentin
Pointe Noire
La Cascade Acomat
Route de la Traversée
Ilet de Pigeon
D23
Saut de la Lézarde
Petit-Bourg
Plage de Malendure
La Maison de la Forêt
Cascade aux Ecrevisses
N1
Bouillante
Goyave
NATIONAL PARK
Ste.-Marie
Distilleries Longueteau
N2
Belair
Marigot
La Soufrière
La Plantation Grand Café
Vieux-Habitants
Matouba
Capesterre
St. Claude
Chutes de Carbet
Baillif
N3
N1
Basse-Terre
Gourbeyre
Trois Rivières
Parc Archéologique de Roches Gravées
Vieux Fort
To les Saintes
15 KILOMETERS
10 MILES
© 2002 HUNTER PUBLISHING, INC

above the rugged shore known as land's end. From here, the island curves north where the rough Atlantic beats against limestone cliffs and shockingly beautiful beaches – a surfer's paradise.

Midway up the eastern coast, the national highway dwindles to narrower roads and the landscape turns to sugarcane fields and barren, rocky ridges with spectacular ocean views. Turning back down the leeward coast from the northernmost **Pointe de la Grande Vigie**, the shore is lined with fine beaches and small towns.

Morne-à-l'Eau, a town inland, has an extraordinary black-&-white above-ground cemetery worthy of a visit. The town is connected to both coasts by national highways.

Once you cross over the Rivière Salée from Grande-Terre to Basse-Terre, you begin an entirely different vacation. **La Soufrière**, the gorgeous big-mama volcano that gave birth to the rocky chain of mountains that form the western half of Guadeloupe, towers over the island, shrouded in clouds and mist, tempting visitors to explore her majestic realm.

Most of the island is protected by the **Parc National de la Guadeloupe**, which includes miles of trails through a thick rain forest. A national highway circles Basse along the coast, allowing easy access to both the lush east side and the arid west rim, while a trans-mountain road cuts across the middle through the national park itself. This trans-mountain road, ***route de la traversée***, is also known as ***la route des Mamelles*** because it climbs the splendid twin peaks known as *les deux mamelles* (two breasts).

The city of **Basse-Terre**, on the southwestern coast, is the capital and administrative hub of Guadeloupe. It sits on a hill overlooking open sea and is prettier and calmer than Pointe-à-Pitre, the island's commercial center.

Most of the wealthiest residents live inland, up the hillside, in the chic town of **Saint Claude**. Nearby,

the little village of **Matouba** serves as the starting point for the **Trace Victor Hugues,** which leads into the Parc National.

North of Basse-Terre City, the national highway connects a string of beach towns along the **Côte-Sous-le-Vent**, where Jacques Cousteau developed an underwater reserve. Here, in this diving paradise at the foot of nationally protected mountains covered by rain forest, a plethora of tour operators offers every opportunity to explore both ocean and land.

The following tours emphasize don't-miss attractions, and the best-of-the-best are highlighted with a star (☆).

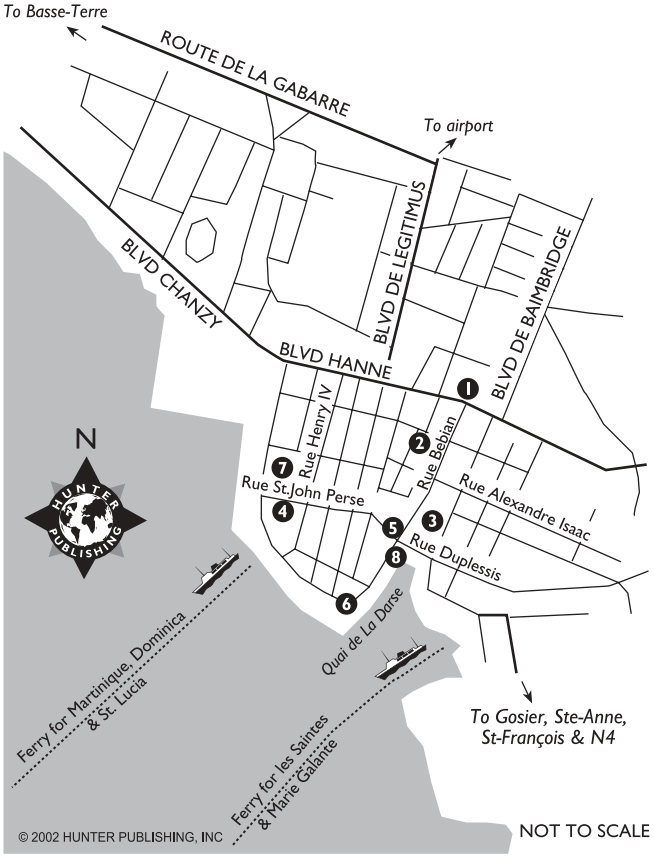
You can drive entirely around either Basse-Terre or Grande-Terre in one long day – but, don't. If you have limited time, pick one of the tours below or hire a guide to show you the sites that interest you most. Visitors on a looser schedule can tackle the suggested itineraries one at a time for a thorough tour of all the attractions.

Pointe-à-Pitre, Grande-Terre

This port city has all the visual contrasts of a typical small town on the French Riviera: tall modern buildings, quaint old wooden structures with wrought-iron balconies, brightly colored fishing boats anchored offshore, sleek cruise ships docked at a sparkling new port facility, bustling people dressed in the latest business fashions and sunburned tourists in shorts and sandals.

But the smell – ah, the smell is pure Caribbean. Whiffs of spices drift from an open-air market. The unique scent of saltwater hangs thickly in the air. Flowers, ferns and mossy trees sweeten the odor of auto-exhaust fumes.

Pointe-à-Pitre



1. Centre des Arts et de la Culture
2. Basilique St.-Pierre et St.-Paul
3. Place de la Victoire
4. Schoelcher Museum
5. Tourist Information
6. Centre St.-John Perse
7. Covered market
8. Public market

An Introductory Tour

Take a one-hour tour of the city's main sites on **Le Petit Train**, an open-air, rubber-tired tram with English commentary by a knowledgeable guide. It departs Saint-John Perse Center on Rue Frébault Monday to Friday on the hour between 9am and noon. Adult fare is 50FF/8€/$7. Children age five to 12 pay 25FF/4€/$4, and anyone younger rides for free. ☎ 83-21-82.

Place de la Victoire

In the tree-shaded historic district surrounding the park-like oasis of Place de la Victoire, lovely colonial buildings provide a glimpse of old Guadeloupe. The square itself once held the dreaded guillotine used to behead aristocrats who opposed a revolutionary government. Today, the three-block plaza has green lawns, wide sidewalks, a fountain, a bandstand and a statue of Félix Éboué, the island's first black governor.

TIP

The **Office Départemental du Tour-isme**, the main tourist information center in Guadeloupe, is the white colonial building with the red roof, a short walk from the waterfront at 5 Square de la Banque, ☎ 82-09-30.

Quaie de La Darse

Quaie de La Darse, at one end of the square, is where ferry boats deliver and pick up inter-island passengers. It is usually jammed with vendors selling fresh fruit, colorful cotton dresses and a variety of tacky souvenirs. Bordering streets lead to the town's oldest structures, which have survived hurricanes and the demands of developers.

Rue Brébian is the square's western boundary, and the art-deco courthouse known as **Palais de Justice** sits at the corner of Rue Alexandre Isaac, the northern boundary. One block farther north, Rue d'Alsace-Lorraine leads left to the little **Place Gourbeyre** and the local outdoor flower market. At the far end of the *place*, the **Basilique de Saint-Pierre et Saint-Paul** has beautiful stained-glass windows and gingerbread metal work. A statue of Admiral Gourbeyre, who rescued many islanders after the devastating hurricane of 1843, stands outside the church.

Victor Schoelcher Museum

Back toward the water, a left on Rue Schoelcher then a left on Rue Peynier brings you to the Musée Victor Schoelcher, ☎ 82-08-04, which was recently improved for the 150-year anniversary of the end of slavery on Guadeloupe. The pink-and-white colonial house is a tribute to Victor Schoelcher, a wealthy Parisian businessman who presided over the abolition movement and represented Martinique in the French Senate.

Victor Schoelcher

Born in Paris in 1804, Schoelcher spent his early adult years as an international salesman for his father's porcelain products. While in the United States and Mexico, he became interested in the movement to abolish slavery.

From 1836 until 1843, he lived and traveled on the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique to observe the living conditions of black slaves. Under the government of the French Republic, he created a commission to study slavery issues, and on April 27, 1848, slavery was abolished in French territory.

Schoelcher served as a French deputy representing Guadeloupe and Martinique from 1848 until 1852. Since he opposed the coup d'état of Louis Napoleon (Napoleon III), and was in disfavor with the Second Empire, he exiled himself to England from 1852 until 1870.

In 1871 he returned to Martinique and was elected deputy and then senator for life. The great statesman and humanitarian died in 1893, and his life is remembered and celebrated each year on July 21, Schoelcher Day.

You can view Schoelcher's artworks and memorabilia at the museum open Monday and Tuesday, 8:30am to 5:30pm, Thursday and Friday, 8:30am to 6pm, and Wednesday and Saturday, 8:30am to 12:30pm. It is closed for lunch from 12:30 to 2pm on days with afternoon schedules. Admission is 10FF/2€/$1.70.

Near the Schoelcher Museum, the **Marché Saint-Antoine** is a happy jumble of shoppers and sellers.

Farmers spill out of the red-roofed open-air shelter onto the streets and sidewalks. Fresh fruits and vegetables are piled high on wooden tables shaded by colorful umbrellas, grandmotherly vendors take browsers by the arm and gently coax them to sniff uncovered bins of pungent spices, and good-natured patois chatter is tossed easily from stall to stall.

TIP

The best time to visit the market is early morning, when the produce is freshest and the air is cooler. Note that many sellers close up their stalls at about noon.

Sougues-Pagès House

Between the market and the Quai de La Darse, at the corner of Rue Boisneuf and Rue de Nozières off Rue Saint-John-Perse, sits the 19th-century Sougues-Pagès house. This prefab chalet-style home was once owned by the director of the Darboussier sugar factory and now serves as a museum devoted to the Guadeloupe-born Nobel Laureate Alexis de Saint-Léger, well known as the poet Saint-John Perse.

Even if you don't want to tour the museum, walk past the Sougues-Pagès house at 9 Rue de Nozières to see the exterior architecture. This style home was popular among wealthy Guadeloupeans during the second half of the last century. The houses were manufactured in pieces in France by workshops that specialized in the metallic architecture made popular by Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, the designer of the Eiffel Tower. All the pieces of each house were boxed and shipped to Guadeloupe, where they were assembled.

The Zévallos house, located near Le Moule on Grande-Terre's eastern coast, is another fine example of the prefab chalet style.

The trademark of these houses is the elegantly crafted wrought-iron railings enclosing wraparound balconies. Every room in the home opens onto the outdoor verandah, which serves as both additional living space and decoration.

The first floor of the **Musée Saint-John Perse** looks like a typical affluent home from the late 1800s, and mannequins dressed in colonial Créole costumes bring the epoch to life. The second floor is dedicated to the poet who was born down the street at 54 Rue de Nozières. Visitors can view his letters, photographs and personal possessions. Stairs lead to a third floor, which is now a library.

The Saint-John Perse museum is open Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm and Saturday from 8:30am until 12:30pm. Admission is 10FF/2€/$1.70. ☎ 90-01-92.

Saint-John Perse

Perse was born May 31, 1887 in Saint-Léger-les-Feuilles on Guadeloupe and given the cumbersome name of Marie René Auguste Aléxis Saint-Léger Léger. People who knew him as a child called him simply Aléxis de Saint-Léger (lay-zhay).

When he was 10 years old, he moved to France with his family and attended school in Pau and Bordeaux, where his father practiced law. In 1911 he published a collection of poems, respected by other writers for their precision and purity. However, the language of his poems was somewhat difficult and his work wasn't popular with the general public.

In 1914, Léger entered the Department of Foreign Affairs as a French diplomat. He advanced

steadily in diplomatic service and gained the rank of ambassador when he was appointed secretary-general at the Foreign Ministry in 1933. While his career in government thrived, he continued to write under the pseudonym Saint-John Perse. One of his better-known works is *Anabase* (1924), which was translated into English as *Anabasis* by T.S. Eliot.

When the Vichy government took over occupied France in the early 1940s, Léger, who strongly opposed Nazism, was dismissed from service and stripped of his French citizenship. He exiled himself to the United States where he wrote deep, personal poems that earned him the respect of fellow writers, who referred to him as "a poet's poet."

His best works, *Exile* (1942), *Vents (Winds*, 1946), *Amers* (*Seamarks,* 1957), *Chronique* (1960), and *Oiseaux (Birds,* 1962) use obscure words and complex symbolism to reflect then-current social conditions. In 1960, the Nobel committee awarded Perse the prize in literature for the "soaring and provocative imagery of his poetry."

This statesman with a poet's heart was the French spirit personified – intellectual, passionate, pragmatic and idealistic. He died September 20, 1975 in Giens, France, and a plaque marks his birth on the Rue René-Boisneuf in Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe.

Centre Saint-John Perse

Back at the waterfront, a short walk from Musée Saint-John-Perse, the new Centre Saint-John-Perse is a good place to grab lunch or do some shopping. If a

cruise ship is in port, the modern $20-million complex will be crowded, but the chic boutiques and restaurants are worth a visit. Pick up some island rum or a bottle of French perfume, peek into the Hotel Saint-John Anchorage, enjoy a French-Caribbean snack and admire the profuse tropical plants that border the clean, wide walkways.

TIP

Driving and parking in Pointe-à-Pitre is no one's idea of vacation. Consider taking a public bus or a taxi into town. If you must drive into the thick of things, avoid rush hours – there's nothing laid-back or island-style about them – and expect to park on a back street, then walk into the town center.

Southern Tour, Grande-Terre

From Pointe-à-Pitre to La Pointe des Châteaux

The southern coast of Grande-Terre has the island's most beautiful beaches, so bring your swimsuit and snorkel equipment. As you drive along from village to village, look for opportunities to pull off the road and follow residents through trampled foliage to hidden sandy beaches and serene rocky coves.

HIGHLIGHTS: *View of* ***Pointe-à-Pitre*** *from Fort Fleur d'Épée;* ***Bas du Fort****, one of the newest and largest marinas in all the Caribbean, which includes the largest aquarium in the Antilles; a succession of soft white-sand* ***beaches*** *just off the main road; the resort*

towns of ***Gosier, Sainte-Anne*** *and* ***Saint-François****;* ***La Pointe des Châteaux,*** *where Guadeloupe ends with a spectacular cliff-top view of the ocean and nearby islands.*

Leave Pointe-à-Pitre on eastbound N4 in the direction of Gosier. Turn right off the highway at the first exit just after you pass under a pedestrian bridge (Elf and Esso gas stations are on opposite corners), then follow the signs to l'Aquarium de la Guadeloupe at the new Bas-du-Fort marina.

Aquarium de la Guadeloupe

Sharks draw the most attention here, but the aquarium also displays a large variety of colorful tropical fish in various tanks. The exhibit is small by US standards, but worth a visit if you're traveling with children or have an interest in marine creatures and ecosystems.

L'Aquarium de la Guadeloupe is open daily from 9am to 7pm. Admission is 38FF/6€/$5 for adults and 20FF/3€/$2.50) for children ages five to 12. ☎ 90-92-38.

Fort Fleur d'Epée

This fort towers above Bas-du-Fort (which translates as *below the fort*) and offers wonderful views of Pointe-à-Pitre and Gosier Island across Grande-Baie. Early French settlers were attracted to this area in the 1600s because of its natural harbor. When the British began to covet the spot for themselves, the vulnerable colonists built Fort Louis for protection. Later, Fort Fleur d'Épée replaced the original fortress and was the site of many battles between French and English armies. Over time, this second fort suffered extensive damage and was rebuilt in the 18th century.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

A major battle between the French, led by Victor Hugues, and the English, commanded by General Grey, took place at Fort Fleur d'Epée in 1794. French troops, fortified by grateful slaves who had been freed by Hugues, finally overcame British soldiers and claimed Gosier.

On a clear day, you may glimpse Marie-Galante and Iles des Saintes in the distance.

Climb the hill to the ruins of Fort Fleur d'Epée for a fabulous view. Linger a bit if you have the time. There's no charge, and visitors are welcome every day from 9am to 6pm. You can stroll the shady grounds, snoop through underground rooms, and explore well-preserved officers' quarters built of coral.

Gosier & Ilet Gosier

Several regattas are held here annually – including the popular Route du Rhum.

Gosier is Guadeloupe's number one tourist area, and the harbor at **Bas-du-Fort** (☆) has become a first-choice port for international sailors. It is also the center for yachting in the Caribbean between Florida and Venezuela.

Year-round boaters often take shelter here in winter, and the channel that divides the island into two parts allows direct access to northern islands.

Even though much of the city's activity centers around the new marina at Bas-du-Fort, even more hotels, restaurants and shops stretch along the beach at **Pointe de la Verdure** and into the surrounding hills. The first (closest to Pointe-à-Pitre) exit for Gosier off N4 leads to the marina, the second takes you to Route des Hôtels on Pointe de la Verdure. From here, D119 leads east to Gosier's Centre Ville, where

additional businesses cluster around Boulevard Général de Gaulle. If you're looking for action – day or night – Gosier is probably the right place for you.

> ★ DID YOU KNOW?
>
> The word *gosier* means throat or windpipe in French, but in Créole it refers to pelicans. Before tourists took over, a large colony of pelicans lived along the beaches here. Settlers called their village Grand Gosier.

By contrast, Ilet Gosier is completely undeveloped. A fisherman or recreational boater is often available to take you across the bay to the little island. Otherwise, ask at the concierge desk of one of the large hotels about joining a group excursion. At times, you may have to share the beach with other tourists, but during off-season you often will have the sand all to yourself.

Plage Caravelle

As N4 twists east from Gosier along the southern coast, crowds thin out and the picturesque little towns sway to a slower Caribbean beat. Superb beaches and private coves can be found right off the highway. One of the best, Plage Caravelle (☆), is just west of Sainte-Anne. Club Med is here, but the beach is public, so don't feel unwelcome.

Getting onto the beach can be tricky since a security gate blocks non-guests from driving onto Club Med property. Before you arrive at this barrier, take the dirt road just past the Esso station that leads to a makeshift parking lot on the left. From here, walk

along the path lined with vendors selling jewelry and batik clothing until you reach the water. The best area of the beach is toward Club Med, and it's worth the trouble to get there.

> ★ NOTE
>
> Nudity is allowed in one section of the beach, but most swimmers wear suits – at least the bottom half – so you'll be comfortable either way.

Sainte-Anne

This is an amiable village with a pretty art-deco church set on the grassy town square and a strikingly white above-ground cemetery. Take Boulevard Mandel to the downtown area, then turn right onto Chemin de la Plage, which leads to a beautiful crescent-shaped beach. This is the perfect spot for an ice cream break, but don't get too comfortable because the best is still to come.

> ★ DID YOU KNOW?
>
> Sainte-Anne is named in honor of Anne of Austria, mother of King Louis XIV, who ruled France when the town was founded late in the 17th century.

Beaches Along N4

Back on N4, make time for stops at two excellent beaches – **Plage de Bois Jolan** and **Plage des Rai-**

sins Clairs (☆). Land around Plage de Bois Jolan (a little sign on N4 points the way down a bumpy dirt road) was recently bought by developers, so building will start soon. If you hurry, you might get there ahead of the bulldozers and have only grazing cows for sand mates.

Talk the talk:
plage = beach
bois = wood
raisins = grapes
clair = clear/light

Plage des Raisins Clairs is a favorite picnic and swimming spot for local families. Seagrape trees shade most of the sand and vendors set up on weekends to sell drinks and ice cream. This is authentic Guadeloupe, and the perfect place to soak up a little native flavor.

Saint-François

At Saint-François (☆), follow signs to the marina and touristy Avenue de l'Europe. A casino faces the wide avenue, flanked by upscale shops and businesses offering traveler services. The island's only golf course is across the street. Down at the marina, luxury yachts are tied to the dock. Sleek ferry boats depart for outer islands. Open-air restaurants line the walkways. Several high-end hotels are within walking distance.

This polished, modern Saint-François is quite different from the old village a short distance away. There, narrow streets lead to a peaceful town square with a little church. A noisy outdoor market offers local produce. Spicy cooking odors and cheery Créole chatter drift from the open windows of small, traditional island homes.

Saint-François set out to build a tourist industry in the 1970s to expand its economy, which was then based on sugar production and fishing. Today it ranks second behind Gosier as Guadeloupe's top resort area.

Petite Terre

Petite Terre's iguanas, birds and crabs are best observed from the shade of a palm tree through half-closed eyes.

Petite Terre, a tiny, arid island seven miles off Grande-Terre's southeastern shore, has become paradise for day-trippers. Several companies take vacationers to this national reserve by catamaran, ferry and glass-bottom boat. Most excursions last all day and include meals, drinks and watersports. Coral reefs protect the clear turquoise water around this desert island, so snorkeling conditions are excellent.

Pointe des Châteaux

East of Saint-François, the island reaches out into the ocean with a thin, gnarly finger. Take D118 out of town to a fascinating place of wild beauty, where water erosion and tectonic shifting have separated huge blocks of earth from the main island. At land's end, sheer cliffs blown bald by the wind are known as Pointe des Châteaux (☆), Point of the Castles, because they resemble stone palaces. There are breathtaking views of La Désirade and Petite Terre across the pounding sea.

For the best look, climb to **Pointe des Colibris**, the wooden cross at the top of the highest hill. A half-mile trail plows through low vegetation to steps that lead up to the summit.

WARNING

The hike isn't difficult, but there's no shade and the path is rocky, so young children and out-of-shape adults may find the going tough.

At the top, you'll have a good view of La Roche, the nearest island, and both La Désirade and Petite Terre are visible in the distance on most days. On clear days, you may see Marie-Galante, Les Saintes and Dominica. Locator tables help you identify each island and its distance from Grande-Terre.

While you're at the summit, look for secluded swimming coves hidden on both sides of the cliffs. The water is dangerous around the point because of swift currents and sharp rocks, but you can swim safely at Anse à la Gourde or Anse Tarare (nudity permitted). Small signs on D118 mark beach access paths, but they are intentionally obscure. Weekends and holidays, you'll know you're near a beach when you come upon dozens of cars parked along the main road.

Archaeologists have found evidence that Arawaks lived around Anse à la Gourde from 300 to 1400 AD.

Back at the parking lot, islanders offer fresh fruit drinks and homemade ice cream (highly recommended). A rustic open-air café, **La Paillote**, ☎ 88-63-61, serves sandwiches and grilled fish – reason enough to drive to this end of the island and a fitting reward for hiking the hill.

Northern Tour, Grande-Terre

From Saint-François to Pointe de la Grande Vigie to Pointe-à-Pitre

National highways do not run along much of the eastern and western coasts of Grande-Terre, so be prepared to take smaller roads north to the wonderful sites near the ocean. This route will also lead you to **Morne-à-l'Eau**, a worthwhile interior stop.

HIGHLIGHTS: *The* ***Musée Edgar Clerc*** *in Le Moule, the former capital of the island; magnificent views at* ***Port d'Enfer*** *and* ***Pointe de la Vigie*** *at the*

tip of the northern coast; one of the world's most ***unusual cemeteries*** *at Morne-à-l'Eau.*

Maison Zévallos

From Saint-François, drive north on N5 past Maison Zévallos. The house is not open for tours, but it's interesting enough from the outside to be worthy of a slow-speed drive-by. Called the sister chalet to Sougues-Pagès, now the Musée Saint-John-Perse, in Pointe-à-Pitre, it shares the same prefab colonial style. The home belonged to a sugar plantation owner when Zévallos was a prosperous town late in the 19th century. Although it's not as well tended as Sougues-Pagès and is said to be haunted, architecture buffs will enjoy viewing the graceful ironwork on the wrap-around balconies.

Le Moule

About three miles farther north, N5 enters Le Moule, once the capital of Guadeloupe and a major sugar port. Today, the town's importance has diminished, but its beaches are popular, especially with surfers. The first beach area, as you enter the town, is **Plage de l'Autre Bord,** where you can picnic on golden sand and snorkel in the relatively calm water. Vendors sell food from mobile wagons and stalls, especially on weekends and holidays, and it's possible to rent watersports equipment at the shop in front of the Cottage Hotel.

Plage de la Baie du Moule is on the other side of Rivière d'Audoin, which runs through the middle of Le Moule. This is where the serious surfers hang out, and the narrow roadside beach is less appealing to

those who don't enjoy being knocked silly by raging waves.

Le Moule itself has nothing outstanding to lure the average tourist. Because of this, it exudes back-in-time island charm. There's a central park where kids play while adults sit in the shade of towering trees. Across the street is a church built in the 1850s and deemed a neoclassical historic monument. The narrow downtown streets that surround the church and park are busy in a lackadaisical way that invites strolling and browsing.

Musée Edgard Clerc

Leaving town on N5, look for D123, which goes up the hill to your right just after a bridge. Follow this road to Musée Edgard Clerc on Parc de la Rosette. The museum building is an historic site that is worth a visit for its architecture. It sits in a large park and contains a facinating collection of pre-Columbian Arawak and Carib artifacts. Several displays portray the arrival of Amerindians to the Lesser Antilles and their way of life before European discovery. Everyday objects of both tribes are displayed in a separate section.

Musée Edgard Clerc is open weekdays, except Wednesday, from 9am to 12:30pm and 2 to 5:30pm; Wednesday from 9am to 12:30pm; Saturday and Sunday from 9am to 12:30pm and 2 to 6:30pm. Admission is 10FF/2€/$1.70. ☎ 23-57-57.

When you leave the museum, continue north on D123 (which becomes D120 then D122) in the direction of Pointe de la Grande Vigie. These are secondary roads that wind through fields of sugarcane and hamlets.

Point at your intended destination on the map when you ask directions of islanders.

TIP

You can get lost here (or think you're lost), so be sure to do this drive during daylight hours with a full tank of gas and a good map.

Trou de Madame Coco

At **Porte d'Enfer** (Gate of Hell), take a break at one of the little huts selling drinks and snacks, then walk along the cliff path that leads to Trou de Madame Coco (☆). No one seems to know who Madame Coco was, but she has become a popular legend. Allegedly, she disappeared in the cove here many years ago while meandering in the surf holding a parasol to shade her lovely face as she gazed longingly out to sea. *Mystérieux*.

This section of coast doesn't require mystery and legend to make it trip-worthy. The views are magnificent. High limestone cliffs tower above a long bay and small white-sand beach. Able-bodied adults won't have trouble walking a few hundred yards from Porte d'Enfer to Trou de Madame Coco. However, if you want to take the path all the way to Pointe Petit Nègre, you must be a serious hiker in good shape, with boots and plenty of water. No whiners.

The route covers about 6½ miles of unshaded, arduous ground, and when you get to the end, you have to turn around and come back. **Pointe du Souffleur** is only a third of the distance and offers a more doable goal. Your reward here is a jet of water shooting into the air when waves gush into an underground cave then burst through cracks in the rocks above. Allow about two hours to hike to Souffleur and back.

Pointe de la Grande Vigie

Leaving Porte d'Enfer, continue north on D122 to Pointe de la Grande Vigie (☆), Lookout Point. This is lands-end north, as Pointe des Châteaux is lands-end east, and it is spectacular. The cliffs are over 250 feet high and plunge down to a rocky coast that is battered by the wild, relentless Atlantic. It's possible to drive almost to the Pointe and then walk a small distance to the edge for the best views of La Désirade and Antigua off in the distance.

Morne-à-l'Eau

Heading back south along the western coast of Grande-Terre, take D122 as far as Anse-Bertrand, a typical fishing village with a few places to pick up a snack. Then connect to N8 in the direction of Morne-à-l'Eau. The only real reason to stop in this inland town is to see the outstanding *cimetière* (☆), a unique graveyard with elaborate black-and-white above-ground shrines. Each house-like monument in the hillside cemetery is constructed of ceramic tile laid out in a checkerboard pattern. Some contain altars decorated with fresh flowers and mementos of the deceased. Others provide chairs or benches where the bereaved can sit and meditate. It is said that some of the burial chambers are air-conditioned. (On All Saints' Day, November 1, families gather here and thousands of candles illuminate the night – an inspiring, mystical sight.)

Since Morne-à-l'Eau is crowded and busy and offers few tourist sites, take N5 out of town after you see the cemetery. The national highway is the fastest route west and south to Pointe-à-Pitre or east to Le Moule. If you want to get back to one of the resort areas on the

southern coast, the easiest course is to avoid the traffic in Pointe-à-Pitre by going to Le Moule then south on N5 to Saint-François or south on D114 to Sainte-Anne.

Southern Tour, Basse-Terre

From Petit-Bourg to the City of Basse-Terre

***HIGHLIGHTS: Parc Archéologique des Roches Gravées**; **Fort Louis Delgrès**; the towns of **Saint-Claude** and **Matouba**.*

Petit-Bourg

Petit-Bourg is across the channel from Pointe-à-Pitre on N1, just south of the Gabare bridge that connects the two halves of Guadeloupe over the Salée River. It is a quiet coastal village near the **Parc Floral de Valombreuse**, a six-acre garden full of flowers and birds common to Guadeloupe. Coming from the north, find the park by turning right off the highway after crossing the Lézarde River onto the road that leads west into the hills above the village toward the hamlet of Cabout.

Valombreuse is open 9am-5pm daily. **Le Pipirite**, an open-air restaurant located here, serves lunch beginning at noon. The admission fees include a complimentary drink. Entrance fees: adults, 38FF/6€/$5; children, 20FF/3€/$2. ☎ 95-50-50.

Back on N1 heading south, you can detour west toward **Montebello** for a tour of the 70-year-old family-run rum factory (☎ 95 41 65; fax 95 48 77) or east toward **Goyave** to see the banana plantations. If you

have plenty of time, make both detours since they are pleasant drives through fertile banana fields.

Sainte-Marie

Make a quick stop in Sainte-Marie for a look at the historic spot where Christopher Columbus landed on November 4, 1493 to tank up on fresh water during his second voyage to the Antilles. A bust of the explorer stands with two anchors in the center of the village.

As you drive out of town, the **Hindu Temple de Changy** demands your attention. The large white edifice is decorated with colorful statues of the religion's deities. It was built in 1974 by descendants of laborers brought from India late in the 1800s, when the end of slavery left the island without enough manpower to operate the plantations.

Longueteau Rum Distillery

Leaving Sainte-Marie, turn inland toward the hamlet of Belair at the sign for **La Plantation Grand Café** and watch for Distillerie Longueteau on the left. The Longueteau family and their property have a long and interesting history, beginning with the Marquis de Sainte-Marie, who was granted this parcel of land by King Louis XIV. In 1895, heirs of the nobleman lost the lovely estate in a gamble to Paul Henri Longueteau. Take time for a friendly, informal tour of the distillery before you visit the tasting shop. Sampling will take on a new significance after you watch the steam mill and hear about the different methods of harvesting and handling the sugarcane.

You can visit Longueteau Rum Distillery weekdays from 9am to 6pm and Sunday from 9am until 1pm. ☎ 86-46-39. No entrance fee.

Plantation Grand Café

Just down the road, Plantation Grand Café explains all the enigmas of bananas.

Tickets are a bit pricey – 60FF/10€/$9 for a tour and 290FF/48€/$41 if you also want lunch at Parc de Valombreuse and a tasting visit at the nearby rum shop. However, bananas and rum are what Guadeloupe is about, so consider splurging on this one.

The blue bags you see hanging from the trees along the roadway assist the fruit in ripening and protect it from nasty bug attacks.

The plantation tour is conducted on a tractor-drawn cart, and you see about 30 varieties of bananas from around the world, visit a lovely Créole garden, and see the owner's house furnished as it was in the 1940s.

Plantation Grand Café is open November to April on weekdays from 9am-5pm and Saturday from 9am-noon. The rest of the year, hours are from 9am-noon on weekdays. ☎ 86-33-06; fax 86-91-69.

Capesterre Belle-Eau

The next stop south on N1 is Capesterre Belle-Eau, the islands's third largest city. It has gorgeous tree-lined roads, a bountiful outdoor market and lots of activity. Coming in from the north you cross **Allée de Flamboyants** where, from May through September, the ostentatious flame trees put on a brilliant exhibit of hot-red blooms.

The town is well equipped with restaurants and shops, and you can stock up on picnic supplies at the Match supermarket. As you leave, going south on N1,

you'll drive through a tunnel of royal palms on **Allée Dumanoir,** named for Créole writer Pinel Dumanoir. The towering trees were planted in the 19th century to form a passageway to the estate of the Marquis of Brinon. The manor house has been destroyed, but the roadway remains as a stunning stretch of highway. There are frequent talks of widening the road, but the beauty of the Allée Dumanoir is expected to be preserved by a second row of palms that have been planted behind the originals.

Chutes du Carbet

Soon after Allée Dumanoir, take a detour off N1 near the hamlet of Saint-Sauveur onto D4. This steep, narrow road climbs high into the Parc National, past the **Grand Étang** (a peaceful but parasite-ridden lake), to the magnificent triple waterfalls, Chutes du Carbet. You must do some hiking to reach the falls, but you can enjoy miles of lush rain forest beauty without ever leaving the road.

Information on hiking around Grand Étang and up to the Chutes du Carbet is found on pages 268-70.

Trois-Rivières & Vicinity

Double-back to highway N1 and follow the signs south to Trois-Rivières, a tranquil waterfront town with ferry service to Les Saintes. If you have time, stroll or drive around town and up into the hills to see the old gingerbread façades on tin-roofed shops and colorfully painted houses. Then, head down to Grande Anse, a dark-sand beach, where you'll have a good view across the ocean of Les Saintes, six miles to the south.

Follow Route du Bord de Mer along the coast to **Parc Archéologique des Roches Gravées** (☆), a botanical garden containing rock carvings left by the Arawak Indians who inhabited the island as early as 300 AD. As you would expect, the relics are badly worn and difficult to make out, but you can ask for a brochure with explanations in English. Even without the ancient etchings, the park is worth a visit because of its beauty. Large banyan trees shade an abundance of flowering plants.

The archeological park is open daily, 8:30am-5pm. Admission is 10FF/2€/$1.70. ☎ 92-91-88.

Vieux-Fort

Highway D6 connects Trois-Rivières with Vieux-Fort at the far southern tip of Basse-Terre. You'll enjoy this scenic stretch of road and have wonderful views of both Les Saintes and the surrounding territory once you reach the town. **Fort de l'Olive** was built here in 1636 and is now known as the *vieux* (old) fort. Since there is no longer a need for soldiers to occupy the fortification, a group of lace-makers have taken over. Visitors are welcome to watch the talented workers at the **Centre de Broderie et Arts Textiles** every day from 9am until 5pm, ☎ 92-01-14.

Before leaving the village of Vieux-Fort, drive by the lighthouse that stands at the southernmost tip of the island, and the large 19th-century church with its interesting bell tower located in the center of town.

From Vieux-Fort, you have a choice of routes to the capital city of Basse-Terre. West and north on highway D6 is the most direct course and offers sweeping views of the ocean. However, you can also backtrack to the east and turn inland onto D7 toward Gourbeyre, a small town in the hills north of Monts

Caraïbes – the Caribbean Mountains. This D7 route gives you the opportunity to hike from Chamfleury (about half a mile south of N1 at the eastern entrance to Gourbeyre), or visit the hot springs at Dolé, near the factory that bottles Capès mineral water.

See "Hiking" on pages 265-270 for details on hiking in the Caribbean Mountains.

Basse-Terre City

Basse-Terre City has had some bad luck since it was founded in 1643 by Charles Houël. Foreign invasions and hurricanes have caused destruction of many historic buildings, and Pointe-à-Pitre's popularity and expansion as a major port resulted in the city's stunted development. However, it has managed to survive as the archipelago's administrative capital, and it is a large, pleasant city imbued with French charm. Take the time to stroll about and see the old buildings, explore the fort and visit the outdoor market.

As you enter the town from the south, **Fort Louis Delgrès** (☆) catches your attention. In 1640, Governor Charles Houël built a fortified house on the site where the fort now stands. Over the years, the fortification has been enlarged, damaged by foreign invasions, refurbished, burned, named and renamed. Today, the imposing walls enclose a small museum, acres of grassy grounds and some well preserved buildings. The highlight, however, is the commanding view of the ocean and surrounding area from the fort's hilltop location.

Fort Delgrès is open daily, 9am-noon and 2-5pm. No entrance fee.

Downtown, there are several pretty spots to explore, so park your car and continue on foot. Start at the Office du Tourisme near the port on Rue du Cours Nolivos, across from the old town square, Liberty

Park (Place de la Liberté) – the yellow colonial-style house up the street is the town hall. Pick up a map and brochures, then walk across the *place* and up Rue Schoelcher to Rue du Docteur Cabre. **Cathédrale de Basse-Terre** is down the street to the right.

*The town of Basse-Terre is perfect for walking, but if you prefer to ride, hop on the **Pom-Pom**, a mini train that covers the historic sites. 40FF/7€/$6; ☎ 81-24-83.*

The church was built by the Jesuits in the mid-1800s in baroque style, and the interior is more welcoming than the sober façade would indicate. You'll find rich wood and handsome altars that offer a peaceful retreat to visitors. When you leave the church, stroll along Baudot, Peynier and Perrinon streets (a right turn to the north as you exit the church and another right to the east on Rue Maurice Marie-Claire) to see several lovely, colorful homes.

The market is busy every day (closed Sunday), but Saturday mornings are the most fun.

The main commercial buildings are on Rue du Cours Nolivos, which becomes Rue de la République when it crosses the bridge over Rivière aux Herbes. Several boutiques and restaurants (McDonald's is at #38 Cours Nolivos) are located along this boulevard, including **le grand marché street market** which overflows the covered building on Boulevard du Général de Gaulle.

A block from the marketplace is the lavishly decorated **Palais du Conseil Général**, designed by well-known Tunisian architect Ali Tur. A block beyond this government building (turn east on Boulevard Gouverneur Général Félix Eboué) are two lovely squares, **Jardin Pichon** and the larger **Place du Champ d'Arbaud**. A large white war memorial stands in the middle of the gardens in the *place,* and several colonial-style homes border the commons. A short walk up Boulevard Eboué takes you to another park, **Jardin Botanique**, where the plants and trees are labeled with small markers.

South of Boulevard Eboué, back toward the waterfront, is the residential neighborhood known as

Quartier du Carmel, which has little rock homes built on narrow, winding streets. Two sites in this area are worth a visit. **Eglise Notre-Dame-du-Mont-Carmel** is a modern church on the site near Rue Ignace where Carmelite priests built a church at the request of Governor Charles Houël in 1651. The fountain is reported to have miraculous powers. **Lycée Gerville-Réache**, once Saint-Louis military hospital, is now a high school.

East of the Carmelite church, where Rue Rémy Nainsouta meets Rue Lardenoy, beautiful grounds surround the **Préfecture**. This grand and stately government building, designed by Ali Tur, was originally the governor's mansion.

From the town of Basse-Terre, you can easily visit **Saint-Claude** (☆) and **Matouba**. Saint-Claude is a gorgeous mountainside village where wealthy Guadeloupeans have weekend homes. Matouba is a major jumping-off point for trails into the national park. Both can be reached by taking highway N3 out of Basse-Terre City. This narrow, winding road offers wonderful views of the countryside and an opportunity to sniff some of the freshest air on earth.

TIP

Saint-Claude makes an ideal base from which to explore the volcano and national park. See *Best Places to Stay* and *Best Places to Eat* for hotels and restaurants in the area.

On the eastern side of Saint-Claude, the highway narrows again and leads up through banana plantations to Matouba, where you can visit hot springs known for their curative powers. The village is home to a large

East Indian population – descendants of plantation workers brought from India after the abolition of slavery.

A monument to Louis Delgrès stands just outside Matouba on the spot where he and his men were killed by Napoleon's troops when they refused to surrender in 1802.

West Coast Tour, Basse-Terre

From Basse-Terre City to Deshaies along the Côte Sous le Vent

HIGHLIGHTS: *Sulphurous* ***hot springs*** *bubbling near the town of Bouillante; the underwater reserve and* ***Ilet de Pigeon****;* ***La Maison du Cacao****; the waterfall at* ***La Cascade Acomat****; the beach and charming town at* ***Deshaies****.*

Highway N2 zigzags up the west coast of Basse-Terre island connecting a string of beach towns that are protected from harsh winds and drenching rains by a towering central mountain range. Small cruise ships often dock in these small villages so that passengers may be near the Cousteau Underwater Reserve and have easy access to the national park and its majestic volcano.

Baillif

Going north from Basse-Terre City, the highway cuts through the little village of Baillif, one of the oldest towns on Guadeloupe.

Very little remains of the earliest structures, but you can visit the ruins of a fort begun soon after the French were defeated by the English army here in

1691. The well-known Dominican missionary Père (Jean-Baptise) Labat hoped the fort would protect Guadeloupe from further attack, but it was destroyed – again by the English – in 1703. Today, all that remains is a little garden surrounding the base of the stone tower where Labat and his men unsuccessfully defended the island.

Vieux-Habitants

Vieux-Habitants, a few miles up the coast, claims to be older than both Baillif and the capital city of Basse-Terre. The earliest residents were French laborers who came to the island beginning in 1636 under contract to la Compagnie des Isles d'Amérique. Their agreement with the company exchanged three years of work for the privilege of remaining permanently in Guadeloupe.

Most of the coffee plantations disappeared late in the 19th century, but Domaine de l'Habitation La Grivelière on D27 has been restored. You may take a guided tour of the maison du café (house of coffee) and the surrounding forest on Monday, 10:30am to 4pm, and all other days from 9am to 4pm. ☎ 98-63-06. In addition, it's possible to tour Habitation Vanibel, a working coffee plantation high in the hills east of town off D13 in the direction of Cousinière.

TIP

Habitation Vanibel is a *gîte* as well as an active farm owned by Ginette and Victor Nelson. Tours cost 40FF/7€/$6, week-long stays run 2,090FF/348€/$298. See *Best Places to Stay* for details, ☎ 98 40 79; fax 98-39-09.

Bouillante

The town of Bouillante – which is the French word for boiling – takes its name from **hot springs** (☆) that bubble from the ground in this region. The smelly, steaming waters are said to have amazing restorative powers, and you can give them a try at **Source de Thomas**, north of the bridge on Thomas Road, where the springs average 188°F.

Jacques Cousteau, the Man-Fish

Jacques-Yves Cousteau was born on June 11, 1910, in the market town of St.-Andre-de-Cubzac near Bordeaux, France. His parents, Daniel and Elizabeth, moved often when he was a child, and the family even lived in New York City for two years. When he was 10, Cousteau spent his summer vacation at a camp on Harvey's Lake, Vermont with his older brother, Pierre. While there, he learned to swim, hold his breath and dive to the lake's murky bottom. It was an experience that began his began his lifelong passion for underwater exploration.

In 1930, he passed the highly competitive entrance requirements for the French Naval Academy and entered with the hope of becoming an airplane pilot. During a round-the-world training cruise, he captured exotic scenes on roll after roll of movie film, including an encounter with South Seas pearl divers who wore peculiar-looking goggles to search for oysters beneath the waves.

A serious car accident prevented Cousteau from earning his wings, and he was assigned to a naval base at Toulon, France as an artillery instructor. There he began to swim daily to strengthen his injured arms

and soon teamed up with a fellow swimmer to experiment with watertight goggles like those he had seen in the South Seas.

Having the ability to see clearly underwater gave Cousteau and his friend the desire to dive deeper and stay under longer, so they designed a snorkel hose and insulated body suit. When the compressed air cylinder was invented, they tinkered with developing a portable breathing machine.

In the midst of creating all these gadgets, Cousteau met and married Simone Melchior. When World War II broke out, he was assigned to spy on Italian occupation forces for the French Resistance, but still managed to continue work on his underwater breathing devices.

Eventually, his determined investigations led him to a Paris engineer named Emile Gagnan, who had developed a valve that allowed cars to run on bottled cooking gas during wartime gasoline rationing. Together, the two came up with a similar valve that allowed compressed air to be fed underwater to a diver. The device was patented as the Aqua-Lung.

Soon Cousteau and Simone were accomplished divers, and their two sons, Jean-Michel and Philippe, were using scaled down Aqua-Lungs to breathe underwater. In 1946, the first commercial self-contained underwater breathing apparatus – SCUBA – was presented for sale.

Jacques bought a 66-foot minesweeper, converted it into a floating laboratory and film studio, and named it *Calypso*. With his wife and a small crew he began searching the world's oceans using his newly developed technology. In 1953 he published *The Silent*

World, a first-person account of the development and potential of scuba diving, and became an instant celebrity.

Protecting the ocean environment became a primary concern with Cousteau and he often spoke about the sea as an exploitable resource. In 1974 he founded the Cousteau Society, dedicated to marine conservation, and warned that underwater life was in danger.

During his lifetime, Cousteau wrote dozens of books, produced and starred in almost 100 films and hosted a TV documentary series. Three of his films won Academy Awards for best documentary, and *The Silent World* also won the Palm d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival.

Jacques-Yves Cousteau died June 6, 1997 from heart problems following a respiratory infection. His memorial service was held at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

Stop at the Office of Tourism on the main road in front of the town hall for maps and brochures. While the village itself has some colorful houses, a pretty park, a church built in 1827, and good waterfront restaurants, most of the activity focuses on and under the ocean.

The Jacques Cousteau underwater reserve (☆) lies between the leeward coast around Bouillante and Ilet de Pigeon. Cousteau called it one of the world's 10 best dive sites and, if you're a diver, this is paradise found. If you're not, you can still enjoy the sights on a glass-bottom boat. Several companies offer tours from **Plage de Malendure**, a black-sand beach with constant activity.

See page 257 for a list of tour operators.

Pointe-Noire

As you continue your tour of the west coast, there are several interesting stops just off N2 near the town of Pointe-Noire. One or more is certain to appeal to you.

La Maison du Cacao (☆), is on Grande Plaine Road north of the point where N2 crosses D23 (Route de la Traversée). Here, you can walk through a pleasant little tropical garden and visit the museum that explains the history, care and uses of cacao trees. Plants and cocoa products are for sale in the boutique, and you'll be invited to enjoy some samples. Self-guided tours run 9am-5pm, Monday through Saturday, and 9am-1pm on Sunday. Admission is 25FF/4€/$3 for adults and 15FF/3€/$2 for children. ☎ 98-25-23.

If you're more interested in vanilla, stop at **La Casa Vanille**, a right turn toward Acomat off N2 north of La Maison du Cacao. Visitors are welcome to tour the small plantation from 9am-3pm Friday through Sunday. You'll see how vanilla is cultivated and used in traditional ways. The 22FF/4€/$3 entrance fee includes a fruit drink served at the end of your tour. ☎ 98-22-77/98-08-18.

Near La Casa Vanille, you can hike to **La Cascade Acomat** (☆), a lovely waterfall that pours into a clear-water pond where you can swim. Find the path past the second fork in the road after you turn off N2 in the direction of Acomat. It takes about 15 minutes of easy walking to reach the waterfall.

Back on N2, as you pass through Pointe-Noire, notice the pretty wooden houses. At one time, the town's residents were well-known for their woodworking expertise and a history of that craftsmanship is displayed

at the **Maison du Bois** on Les Plaines Road at the southern entrance to town. Admission is only 5F/1€/$1, so stop to admire the exhibits any day (except Tuesday) from 9:30am until 4:30pm. ☎ 98-17-09.

Deshaies

Farther north, scenic N2 twists along the cliffs until, suddenly, you see tiny, picturesque Deshaies (☆) tucked into a cove at the bottom of the mountains. The village is known for its charming Créole-style homes and its magnificent Grande-Anse beach. Several good restaurants and shops line the road that runs along the shore, and a variety of bungalows and inns are scattered around the area. This is a popular location for divers, fishermen and beach bums.

The Northern Loop, Basse-Terre

Across the Route de la Traversée and Along the Northern Coast

HIGHLIGHTS: *the waterfall at* ***Saut de la Lézarde****; the waterfall at* ***Cascade aux Écrevisses****; the* ***National Park****; the towering peaks of* ***Deux Mamelles*** *and the view from Morne à Louis;* ***Le Musée du Rhum****.*

The **Route de la Traversée** (☆) cuts east/west across Basse-Terre island through the mountains and rain forest of the national park.

TIP

To get the most enjoyment from this tour, bring hiking boots or good walking shoes, bottled water, insect repellent, sun screen and a waterproof windbreaker.

Saut de la Lézarde

Begin north of Petit-Bourg where highway N1 intersects D23, the cross-island roadway. A few miles west, turn south toward Vernou on D1 to Saut de la Lézarde (☆), Lizard's Leap. From the parking lot next to a concrete snack shop just outside of town, follow the trail downhill through banana fields and lush forest for about 20 minutes to the magnificent 45-foot waterfall that cascades into a rocky pool. This spot is one of the most stunning sites on the island, but less touristy because of its location and the required walking.

The hike back uphill to the parking area will take twice as long as the downhill trip.

WARNING

Don't try to hike to the falls in the rain. The path is slippery and steep, and water can quickly rise to dangerous levels.

Cascade aux Ecrevisses

Back on the Route de la Traversée, watch on the left for a well-marked parking lot and the beginning of the trail to Cascade aux Ecrevisses (☆), Crayfish Waterfall. This is one of the most popular attractions on Basse-Terre, as well as one of the easiest to reach.

From the parking lot, simply take a short walk down a level walkway to the falls.

Picnic tables are located in a shady area just across the street from the parking lot.

Get to the top of the cascade by taking the trail on the right as you face the waterfall – the path on the left is used as a 20-foot slide into the Corossol River. If it's not too crowded, jump in and swim behind the falls where you can sit in a hollow and allow the water to cascade in front of you.

La Maison de la Forêt

The Forest House (☆) is the visitor center for the national park and the starting point for three easy interpretive trails. The center is not large, but there are some interesting exhibits that allow you to soak up an abundance of facts in a short time. Open daily, except Tuesday, 9:30am-4:30pm. There's no admission fee.

It's possible to cover all three interpretive trails at the Forest House in about 1½ hours. The longest walk requires close to an hour, but the other two can be done in 15 minutes each. Signs along the paths describe the types of trees and the three levels of vegetation found in the National Park. This is especially interesting for those who can't (or choose not to) make the rigorous hikes into the rugged forest.

Col des Deux Mamelles

As you travel west from La Maison de la Forêt on the Traversée, you soon come to the Col des Deux Mamelles – Pass of the Two Breasts – winding between two mountains that, to some people, look like women's breasts. Perhaps you'll see the resemblance from the viewpoint atop 2,437-foot Morne à Louis. As you go west on the Traversée, watch for the side road on the right that leads up to the summit of Louis. At

the top, you'll find some telecommunication antennas and an outstanding view of the island, including the pair of *mamelles*, Petit-Bourg (2,348 feet) and Pigeon (2,519 feet).

Le Parc Zoologique et Botanique is less than a mile west of the cutoff to Morne à Louis on the Travarsée. Don't bother stopping. The entire exhibit consists of a pair of racoons, some iguanas and a few birds in small cages. As for the botanical displays, there are much better to be found elsewhere. If you must visit, the hours are 9am-5pm daily, and the entrance fee is 25FF/4€/$3 for adults and 15FF/3€/$2 for children. ☎ 98-83-52.

See "West Coast Tour" for information on Deshaies and Pointe-Noire.

Sainte-Rose & Vicinity

When you reach the junction of D23 (Route de la Traversée) and N2, turn north and drive past Pointe-Noire and Deshaies to the fishing village of Sainte-Rose. If you need a break, stroll along the seaside where all the action takes place. In the mornings, the local fishermen arrive here with their catch to sell, and later in the day you'll see their brightly colored fishing boats (*saintoises*) pulled up on shore.

Le Musée du Rhum (☆) is just outside of town, a right turn off N2 in the direction of Bellevue – follow the signs. Don't let the name fool you. This museum is about more than liquid refreshment. Before you leave here, you'll have a good understanding of the 300-year history of West Indian traditions, an up-close-and-personal knowledge of more than 5,000 beautiful insects from around the world, and a solid appreciation of the rum industry. After you view the video documentary and see one of the world's largest beetles, you'll be invited to sample various types of rum produced by the Reimonenq distillery, located next door.

The Rum Museum is open Monday-Saturday, 9am-5pm; Sunday, 10am-1pm and 3-5pm. Admission is 40FF/7€/$6 for adults, 25FF/4€/$3 for children 11-18, and 20FF/3€/$2 for kids 10 and younger. ☎ 28-68-63/28-79-92; fax 28-82-55.

This may be the last distillery on the island to still use power from a paddlewheel to crush the sugarcane.

You can also tour **Le Domaine de Séverin**, a centuries-old, medal-winning rum distillery at the base of the mountain between Sainte-Rose and Lamentin, east of N2. There's no admission charge, but you can take a guided tour on a mini-tram for a charge of 30FF/5€/$4. You'll get a bit of West Indies history to go with the story of rum-making.

Visitors are also invited to stroll through the gardens, observe the crayfish breeding pond and sample various spicy sauces made on the property by family members.

Le Domaine de Séverin is open Monday-Saturday, 7:30am-12:30pm and 2:30-5pm. ☎ 28-91-86; fax 28-36-66.

If you're returning to Grande-Terre, N2 becomes N1 as it swings past Baie-Mahault, once the hangout for unscrupulous pirates. Although the town square has an interesting church, there's no need to stop unless you're interested in touring the nearby Mangrove. Excursion boats leave from the small fishing port near the center of town.

Guadeloupe's largest shopping mall and most important industrial area can be seen from the highway as it crosses over the Gabarre bridge onto Grande-Terre.

Organized Tours

Cruise-ship passengers and visitors on a tight schedule can see many of Guadeloupe's highlights in a single day, but the island is huge, so it's best when explored in small pieces over several days. Numerous agencies offer guided tours, usually in Land Rovers. Before you sign on for a daylong excursion, be sure to ask:

- Does the guide speak English?
- How many people will be in the group?
- What type vehicle is used, and is it air-conditioned?
- Are guests picked up and dropped off at various locations, and in what order?
- Are snacks, drinks and meals included?
- What is the scheduled itinerary, and are any weather-related problems expected?

Your hotel or the tourist information office can suggest local tour operators to meet your expectations, or call one of the following, recommended for friendly, knowledgeable, and bilingual guides:

TOUR COMPANIES	
Aventure des Iles, Gosier	☎ 85-02-77
Emeraude, Basse-Terre	☎ 81-98-28; fax 81-98-12
Evasion Sport Nature, Gosier	☎ 94-29-11; fax 84-60-13
Jacky Action Sport, Baie-Mahault	☎ 26-02-34; fax 26-02-34; http://perso.wanadoo.fr/budokan; e-mail budokan@wanadoo.fr
La Guadeloupe sur Mesure, Saint-François	☎ 85-54-08; fax 88-51-75
Nature Expérience, Abymas	☎ 20-75-78; fax 20-75-76; e-mail nature-experience@wanadoo.fr

To call Guadeloupe from outside, dial 011-590-590, then the number given in this guide; to call within the island, dial 590, then the number.

TOUR COMPANIES	
Parfum d'Adventures, Saint-François	☎ 88-47-62; fax 88-47-91; www.parfumdaventure.com
Sports D'Av., Pointe-à-Pitre	☎ 32-58-41; fax 26-66-65
Vert Intense, Basse-Terre	☎ 99-34-73; fax 99-34-73; www.vert-intense.com

Sunup to Sundown

The Very Best Attractions

Le Parc National (☆), ☎ 80-24-25, on Basse-Terre is by far the most spectacular feature of Guadeloupe. It protects 42,748 acres, almost half of the island, including **La Soufrière** (☆), a 4,800-foot active volcano known as *La Vielle Dame*, the Old Lady. In addition, 180 miles of marked trails twist through the park's rainforest and up into the mountains where waterfalls cascade into crystal-clear pools.

See Le Parc National on the Web at www.parcsnationaux-fr.com/guadeloupe in French, but click on the icons to view pictures.

The park is ideal for rugged hikes, unhurried walks, and leisurely driving tours. Three hundred types of trees tower over a thick jumble of vines and flowering bushes that house tropical birds, a few small mammals and some shy reptiles (none poisonous).

Outside the park, the **Cousteau Underwater Reserve** (☆) off the west coast demands most of the attention. Even novices can enjoy diving with an instructor or observing from the dry comfort of a glass-bottom boat. Sun-seekers will find protected coves of soft sand along the shores of both Grande-Terre and Basse-Terre, and all types of watersports, including sailing and deep-sea fishing, are available on the more touristy beaches.

Beaches

The famous **Underwater Reserve** (☆) developed by Jacques Cousteau sits off the western coast of Basse-Terre along a stretch of sand called La Côte-Sous-le-Vent (the less windy coast) or the Golden Corniche. It is the main scuba area with dramatic underwater treasures. Hence, the shore is sometimes overrun with tour groups and divers. If you're looking for a quiet spot to spread a towel and enjoy a swim, there are other choices.

All beaches are public and free, but a few charge a fee for parking, and only registered guests may use the facilities of shorefront hotels.

Grande-Terre's southern coast is a beach-lover's dream with white sand and calm Caribbean seas. To the east, along the Atlantic, huge waves crash dramatically against golden-sand coves guarded by steep cliffs – nirvana for serious surfers. Northern beaches are popular with the islanders on weekends but usually abandoned at other times. Basse-Terre's beaches tend toward wilder surroundings with fewer creature comforts, and the sand may be gray, tan or black.

WARNING

If you don't see anyone in the water, be cautious. The locals may stay away because of dangerous surf or strong currents. If you see a sign, but don't read French, assume it's a warning until someone tells you otherwise.

Basse-Terre Beaches

Plage de Viard is a black-sand beach with calm waters between Petit-Bourg and Goyave. It's a nice place

to take a break when touring the east coast. Hobie Cat champion Jean-Marie Thélier operates a watersports center here and you'll see plenty of Cats and kayaks on the water. If you want to give it a try, contact **Cataraïbes Evasions**, ☎ 95-33-62; fax 95-33-63; www.antilles-info-tourisme.com/guadeloupe/cat-gb.htm; e-mail tjm.cataraibe@wanadoo.fr.

La Plage de Roseau is a small bay near Sainte-Marie where Christopher Colombus first came ashore. There are picnic tables on the beach, and you can pick up lunch supplies in town.

Large weekend beach crowds at Grande Anse often leave the area littered.

La Plage de Grande Anse (south) is one of two beaches on Basse-Terre with the same name, so don't confuse them. This one, near Trois-Rivières, is on D6, in the direction of Vieux-Fort. The sand is dark gray, but this is still one of the most naturally beautiful beaches on the island.

Snack shacks and watersports huts supply everything you need for an active afternoon. On a clear day, you'll have a nice view of Les Saintes.

WARNING

Strong currents and rough waves at Grande Anse can be a problem for children and weak swimmers.

La Plage de Rivière Sens runs from the marina at Basse-Terre City along D6 toward Vieux Fort. Sunsets are spectacular here.

La Plage de Rocroy is between Basse-Terre City and Vieux-Habitants. On weekends, you'll find groups of friends and families on the small gray-sand beach, but weekdays are fairly quiet. There are a few tables for picnicking.

La Plage de la Petite Anse, surprisingly, is not that petite. The **Domaine de la Petite Anse** (☎ 98-78-78), an inn with bungalows and a pool occupies, part of the beach, and cliffs form a natural wall, but still there's room to spread out under the palms.

As you drive along the coast, watch for signs marking little coves with no facilities, but plenty of beauty.

La Plage de Malendure (☆) is the center of diving activities, so expect plenty of company. Restaurants, bars and boutiques line the gray-sand beach. You're likely to find calmer spots farther north on N2.

Anse Caraïbe, near Mahaut, is not large, but it's shaded and popular with local residents.

La Grande Anse ☆ (north), like the beach with the same name to the south, is one of the most naturally beautiful spots on Basse-Terre. Palm trees line a vast stretch of creamy white sand that slopes steeply into a rough surf to create the perfect beach scene. Snack bars, changing rooms, watersports and boutiques are available.

WARNING

Waves at Grande Anse are more suited to body surfing than recreational swimming. Take care, especially with children.

La Plage de Riflet (☆) is a long, unshaded beach just north of Grande Anse that actually connects (by a walking path) to **Plage de la Perle**, a lovely, shady, fairly uncrowded beach. Although the surf can be strong at times, you are more likely to find calm water here than elsewhere on the west coast.

Petit Bas-Vent is occupied by Touring Club de Fort Royal (once Club Med), but the beach is public and less crowded than Grande Anse.

La Plage de Clugny, around the northern curve of Basse-Terre Island toward Sainte-Rose, is posted as dangerous, so don't go into the water. However, it looks out on l'Ilet à Kahouanne, so stop for the view from the golden-sand beach.

Grande-Terre's Southern Riviera

This popular playground begins near Gosier in the Bas-du-Fort section and runs almost continuously past the marina in Saint-François. You have your choice of excellent swimming and lounging beaches with every creature comfort. If you're looking for watersports, you can rent anything from mask and snorkel to a windsurfing board from private vendors and hotel shops. Snacks and drinks are readily available, and there are numerous shady spots for a picnic.

Bas-du-Fort/Gosier (☆). A super white-sand beach stretches behind the Marissol and Fleur d'Epee hotels. The calm water is perfect for swimmers and palm trees provide plenty of shade. There are snack bars, watersports centers and restaurants along the expansive shore.

Pointe de la Verdure/Gosier (☆). You can walk from one beach to another along this area lined with large resorts. At one end, near the Créole Beach Hotel, there's no shade and sparse sand, but you can spread a towel on the grassy lawns around the beach. Vendors stroll about, but, for the most part, they aren't aggressive and will move on if you're not interested in their wares.

Farther down, near the Salako Hotel, you'll find palm trees and more sand. Near the Arawak Hotel, the beach curves in a wide, shady arc protected on both ends by stone jetties. The beach area near the Callinago Hotel is small, but adequate, with fine sand and plenty of trees.

Ilet Gosier (☆). This picturesque little island just off Gosier's shore features a charming lighthouse and wonderful beaches. It can be reached quickly by boat, and you may find an islander who will take you over for a small fee. A more dependable mode of transportation is by rental boat or with a group excursion from one of the hotels in Pointe de la Verdure. Since there is little development on the island – only a church and a few old houses scattered in the hills – you have a good chance of finding a private stretch of fine white sand.

If you can rouse yourself from the beach, tour the lighthouse while on Gosier Island.

Petit Havre is popular for its small coves protected by offshore reefs. Find it by turning right about two miles outside Gosier, just before the minuscule hamlet of Mare Gaillard. You'll see a few fishermen and locals enjoying the calm water and powdery beach. There's a small shack selling snacks and drinks.

The water at Plage du Bourg is quite shallow even a long distance from the shore.

Plage du Bourg translates as market-town beach, and it's located in the lively town of Sainte-Anne.

There are plenty of creature comforts within easy walking distance, such as restaurants, mobile snack vans and grocery markets. Roving vendors sell T-shirts, ice cream and drinks, so you actually don't have to leave your lounge chair, unless you want to. If you're looking for a place to set up for the day, this is a good choice. Otherwise, there are better options both east and west.

This beach is a wonderful place for children. Strollers can be rolled in directly from the parking lot.

La Plage Caravelle (☆) is possibly the most famous beach on Grande-Terre for two reasons: Club Med is located here, and swimming and sunning *au naturel* is *au courant*. Besides, the place is gorgeous. Finding it and actually getting onto it, however, can be a bother, since Club Med won't allow non-guests to access the public beach through the resort. You'll have

to park a short distance away and walk to the beach, which is no big deal and worth the effort.

TIP

If you want to sample Club Med life just for a day, outside visitors are welcome from 10am to 6pm for a fee of 250FF/42€/$35 per person. You can take advantage of all facilities except scuba diving, water skiing, and the huge lunch buffet. Be sure to bring ID. For reservations, ☎ 76-72-72.

Complete nudity is allowed here, except on Club Med property, where bottom cover is required.

West of Sainte-Anne, coming from Gosier, pass the obscure sign indicating the entrance to Club Med and go about 100 feet to the next right turn across from the Esso station. You'll be on a narrow, bumpy road that eventually comes to a fenced parking area. From here, walk down a path lined with vendor stalls to the beach. Go through the turnstile on the right and continue along the beach past a watersports shack until you find a suitable shady spot to call your own. The island visible in the distance is Marie-Galante.

Talk the talk:

Plage = Beach
Anse = Cove
Sable = Sand
Vague = Wave

La Plage de Bois Jolan is about a mile east of Sainte-Anne. A small sign indicates the turn off the highway (if it hasn't already been removed by developers) onto a road that is not much more than a rutted path. The islanders are unhappy to see this beach area "improved" because it is a popular weekend gathering place for residents of Saint-François and Sainte-Anne. Until construction begins, this long, narrow stretch of shaded sand and shallow water protected by a coral reef is jumpin', mon, no problem. Boom-boxes provide Caribbean background music for picnics, ball games, domino matches and chillin' – big time. If you're looking for peace and quiet, come during the week.

Anse Gros Sable is a couple of miles past Bois Jolan off N4 going east toward Saint-François – turn right toward Helleux near the windmill. The only reason to come here is that you have a fair chance of being alone. Despite the name – roughly, "lots of sand" – the beach is small and shadeless. What sand there is, however, is nice, and locals come here on weekends to enjoy the calm water. Most tourists can't find it.

La Plage des Raisins Clairs, just before you enter the town of Saint-François, is named for the light-colored seagrape trees that grow along the sand.

This beach is among the best on Grande-Terre because it has good waves, plenty of shade and is large enough never to seem crowded, even when it is. Like Bois Jolan, this place is rockin' on the weekends. On holidays, some people have so much fun they don't want to leave, so they pitch a tent or sleep on the sand under a million stars – which is totally cool with the local police at these times.

La Plage des Hôtels de Saint-François is the generic name of a wide ribbon of sand that curls along the bays behind the island's best resorts. The best way to get to the beach, if you're not a guest of one of the hotels, is to park on Avenue de l'Europe, walk along the sidewalk behind the marina, and take a left turn. Soon, the walkway turns to sand, and you are there.

TIP

Guests at the ultra-chic La Cocoteraie (the first resort you pass coming from the marina) and Le Hamak (the last resort) are quiet, refined types, and there are few gate-crashers on *their* beaches. You'll stick out like an ugly American unless you respect everyone's privacy.

Other Beaches on Grande-Terre

D118 Beaches are reached by trodden paths off the four-mile road leading from Saint-François to Pointe des Châteaux. Anse du Manceniller and Petite Anse Kahouanne are two of these no-facilities, marginal-sand beaches. If you want to try one, park on the road where you see other cars pulled up beside paths that lead into the underbrush. You may find a winner, especially if you like to snorkel.

Because La Plage de Tarare is well off the road and hidden by seaside vegetation, it is a popular spot for nude sunbathing.

La Plage de Tarare (☆) is a sheltered cove around the northern bend of the slim finger of land that pokes into the ocean at the southeastern tip of Grande-Terre. Usually the Atlantic side of the island is too rough for swimming, but reefs absorb the brunt of the surf's rage at Tarare.

Arrive in the morning, if you like shade, and in the afternoon if you want strong Caribbean sun – and lots of company.

> **TIP**
>
> Tarare isn't easy to find, so watch closely for the inconspicuous sign on the north side of the road leading to Pointe des Châteaux. Once you park, you still have a three- or four-minute walk to the beach.

Tarare has a sandy beach but the cove is full of boulders, rocks and reefs so the snorkeling is superb. You have a fair chance of seeing an octopus or barracuda, and even inexperienced observers will see an abundance of colorful fish and coral.

TIP

Bring your own drinks and snacks, because there are no facilities at Tarare. The vendors and restaurant in the parking lot near Pointe des Châteaux are a hot hike away.

La Plage de la Gourde is near Tarare and has a fine sandy beach. During the summer and on some weekends camping is allowed, but check with the tourist office or police in Saint-François before you set up overnight comforts. Gourde is usually less crowded than Tarare. The access path is on the main road (D118) to Pointe des Châteaux, before you reach Tarare, and a small sign marks the way.

La Plage de l'Autre Bord means "of the other bank" and refers to the Rivière d'Audoin, which runs through the town of Le Moule into the Atlantic Ocean and has a beach on each side. Autre Bord is the main tourist beach with all the amenities to make your visit enjoyable.

La Plage de la Baie du Moule is, in this case, Le Moule's *autre,* or other, beach. The sand is just a narrow strip close to the road, but surfers love it because the waves are big and steady.

TIP

If you're not a surfer, but enjoy watching, order something at **Le Spot**, an open-air restaurant right on the water with an excellent view of all the action.

Porte d'Enfer means Gate of Hell, but the lagoon here is calm and lovely, more like paradise than Hades. On D120, just before the road turns west and becomes D122, you'll find the pebbly beach in a deep cove. On weekends, islanders set up barbecue grills and beach umbrellas and settle in for long days of picnicking, lounging and swimming in the calm water. If you come unprepared, there's a snack van and picnic tables under nearby trees. Outside the sheltered bay, the water is quite wild, with pounding surf and fierce currents.

Take your hiking boots so you can climb to Trou à Madame Coco, a steep drop off one of the cliffs that shelter Porte d'Enfer from the turbulent Atlantic.

La Plage de l'Anse Laborde and **la Plage de la Chapelle** are two good take-a-break spots south of Pointe de la Grande Vigie at the northern tip of Grande-Terre. Laborde has a lot of pretty sand, but the current is strong, so this is the better beach for napping or picnicking. It is at the north end of the town of Anse-Bertrand (turn west toward the water at Chez Prudence Restaurant). Chapelle is at the southern end of town and a sign points the way. You can pick up a snack at a vendor hut or get into a volleyball game with the locals. Or just stretch out on the soft sand and relax.

Anse du Souffleur is great fun, and a fine place to watch the sun set.

Anse du Souffleur is within walking distance from the main road in Port-Louis. (You'll have to pay for parking unless you drive around long enough to find a spot outside the *payant* section.)

On the beach, snack shacks have set up tables on the golden sand for your dining pleasure, steel-drum or reggae musicians play your favorite songs, and everyone from town turns out with their kids, dogs and grandmothers to keep you company.

Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin (☆) is not a beach. It's part of the Parc National de la Guadeloupe, a gigantic ecosystem which is two-thirds underwater and covers a vast part of the west coast of Grande-Terre. It is the island's most mysterious natural setting, full of seaweed-tangled water, coral reefs, a salty river, mangrove swamps, fish, crustaceans – and lots of bugs with not-so-mysterious intentions and poor attitudes. Wear plenty of repellent.

Never touch coral. A reef takes decades to build. Don't destroy it.

Diving & Snorkeling

The underwater environment of the West Indies is one of the world's most impressive. In Guadeloupe, certified divers have a wide choice of deep-sea sites to explore, and even inexperienced divers can discover incomparable beauty in shallower water with a dive-master guide.

Anyone with a mask and snorkel can float face-down in warm, shallow water near most beaches to watch colorful fish swimming in synchronized schools and feeding off tiny particles among wondrous living corals. For a more dramatic show, glass-bottom boats cruise to offshore spots where passengers view amazing underwater animation.

Few dangerous species live in the ocean around Guadeloupe. However, when in the water, beware of the long spines on the black poisonous sea urchin. In addition, orange fire coral will cause a stinging rash, and occasionally you may encounter a jellyfish. Even less frequently, a moray or barracuda may come near shore. Crayfish and turtles are protected species. Do not disturb them.

The Cousteau Underwater Reserve (☆) off Pigeon Island is a quick boat ride from Malendure or Deshaies. Jacques Cousteau founded the reserve

early in his career and proclaimed it one of the 10 best dive sites in the world. You'll hear many disclaimers today. Some say Cousteau was simply biased in favor of a French territory, or he hadn't explored many parts of the world at that time, or much of the original beauty has been destroyed by over-exploration.

Pay no attention. The reserve is still an indisputable wonderland. Go.

Dive shops charge about 310FF/50€/$45 per dive with an instructor and about 175FF/28€/$25 per dive without an instructor (for certified divers with advanced ratings). Serious divers will need to show their certification card, a doctor's note verifying good health and an insurance card in order to rent equipment or join a diving group.

TIP

Most instructors have been certified under the French CMAS rather than PADI or NAUI, so make certain you understand and feel comfortable with the differences before you sign on.

If you prefer to go along on the boat and snorkel rather than dive, the charge is about 140FF/23€/$20. Multiple-dive packages are offered at lower rates per dive.

Scuba-diving off Grande-Terre is not as interesting as off Basse-Terre, but some large hotels offer resort courses and arrange boat dives. Snorkeling, on the other hand, is fairly decent on beaches with close-in reefs. The best spots are probably off Ilet du Gosier and the coves between Saint-François and Pointe des Châteaux.

It's a good idea to bring your own mask, fins and snorkel so you'll have them whenever you come upon an off-the-tourist-path snorkeling opportunity. However, you can rent from watersports centers on the major tourist beaches for about 50FF/8€/$7 per day.

Several companies run day-trips that include diving and snorkeling. Itineraries and hours of operation change, depending on whether it is high or low tourist season, so call the tour company or ask at your hotel before you plan your day.

Dive Centers

The following dive shops are located near the Réserve Cousteau and are recommended for their friendly, bilingual instructors and guides:

Plaisir Plongée Caraïbes
Plage de Malendure, ☎ 98-82-43; fax 98-82-84

Aux Aquanautes Antillais
Plage de Malendure, ☎ 98-87-30; fax 90-11-85

Evasion Plongée
Bouillante, ☎ 98-93-53

Les Heures Saines
Rocher Malendure, ☎ 98-86-63; fax 98-77-76

If you're staying in the Gosier area, try:

Aquafari
Créole Beach Club, ☎ 84-51-57; fax 90-21-87

Blue Bubbles
Marina de Rivière Sens, ☎ 99-06-65

Caraïbes Plongée
Canella Beach Hotel, ☎ 90-44-00

Sailing

Guadeloupe is internationally known as a favored spot among sailors. Even if you don't know the first thing about sailing, you'll be tempted to give it a try when you see the colorful sailboats catching perfect trade winds and gliding gracefully across calm waters. Plenty of operators rent crewed or bare-boat craft, and local tour companies run full-day, half-day and evening cruises.

If you want to rent your own boat or charter a cruise to another island, check with the activities desk at one of the major resorts. Scheduled group trips leave from the marinas at Pointe-à-Pitre, Bas-du-Fort and Saint-François. You can also rent a Sunfish, Sailfish, Hobie Cat or windsurfer, and if you don't know how to manage it, there's usually someone on-site to give you a lesson.

Boat Rentals

In the marina at Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 93-66-20, one of the following companies is sure to have a boat to meet your needs. Most can be chartered with or without a crew for any length of time.

To call Guadeloupe from outside, dial 011-590-590, then the number given in this guide; to call within the island, dial 590, then the number.

The Moorings
☎ 90-81-81; fax 87-49-47
In the US, 813-535-1446 or 800-535-7289; fax 813-530-9747

Sun Sail
Gosier, ☎ 90-82-80; fax 90-93-26
In the US, 410-2802553; fax 410-280-2406

Star Dust
Gosier, ☎ 90-92-02
In the US, 800-772-3500

Cap Sud
Gosier, ☎ 90-76-70; fax 90-76-77

Tropical Yacht Service
Gosier, ☎ 90-84-52; fax 90-82-83

Star Voyage
Gosier, ☎ 90-86-26; fax 90-85-73

Elsewhere around the island, check with these companies for boat rentals:

Nautica
Gourbeyre, ☎ 81-05-47

Paradoxe Croisieres
Marina Saint-François, ☎ 88-41-73 or 88-79-52

Evasion Marine
Marina Saint-François, ☎ 84-46-67

Boat Excursions

Several operators run a medley of boat trips from docks around the island. Each tour is priced separately, but expect to spend about 125FF/21€/$18 for a half-day trip. Full-day and dinner cruises are in the 250FF/42€/$36 per person range. Some of the best and most diverse include:

Papyrus
Marina Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 90-92-98
This glass-bottom boat allows you to view the underwater world of the Rivière Salée and the Grand Cul-de-Sac Marin in dry comfort as it makes its way up to l'Ilet Caret off the northeast coast of Basse-Terre.

Paoka
Baie Mahault, ☎ 25-74-78
Grab a ti-punch and relax while this glass-bottom boat takes you from the north shore of the narrow strip of land that joins Grande-Terre to Basse-Terre. On the way you'll have wonderful views of protected nature in the swamps and sea around Lamentin.

King Papyrus
Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 90-92-98; fax 90-71-71
This 66-foot red catamaran offers day and night excursions with plenty of food, drink, music and local flavor. You have a choice of trips, which include the mangrove swamps, the nature reserve and Caret Islet. There's even a two-island tour that hits several major land-and-sea sites on both Grande-Terre and Basse-Terre.

Caraïbes Croisières
Pointe-à-Pitre, ☎ 93-63-81 or 35-55-31
The captain promises you won't be seasick during the hour-long trip to l'Ilet Caret aboard this super-equipped, super-comfortable boat. Mask, snorkel and fins are provided for exploring the coral-protected lagoons and watching the multi-colored fish. A gourmet barbecue featuring flambéed bananas is served on the sandy beach of l'Ilet Caret.

Ask for grilled lobster – on request and at extra charge – for a special treat.

L'Express des Iles
Pointe-à-Pitre and Saint-François
☎ 83-12-45; fax 91-11-05
These ultramodern catamarans have been fast-boating passengers between Guadeloupe and the outer islands for a dozen years. You can hop aboard in Pointe-à-Pitre or Saint-François and be on Les Saintes or Marie-Galante in 45 min-

utes. This is a great way to see the outer islands during a day-trip and be back at your hotel in Grande-Terre in time for dinner. Round-trip ticket prices are about 220FF/35€/$30, depending on departure/arrival points.

Bateaux Verts
Gosier, ☎ 90-77-17
This green, glass-bottomed boat leaves from the aquarium near Gosier. Passengers tour the three ecosystems of the Marine National Park guided by a marine biologist. This is spoon-fed knowledge at its finest. Snacks and drinks are served on board.

Privilège Croisière
Gosier, ☎ 84-66-36; fax 84-46-15
Most visitors notice this great, white catamaran with a lovely white sail from the shore. It leaves both Pointe-à-Pitre and Saint-François for the islands of Les Saintes, Marie-Galante, Petite-Terre and Desirade. As it sails past the beaches of Grande-Terre, passengers are seen sprawled on deck in swimsuits with iced drinks in hand. You probably won't be able to resist the temptation to join them.

Falling Star
Saint-François, ☎ 88-53-96; fax 88-77-94
Check the schedule for this motorized catamaran well in advance. It doesn't go every day, but when it does, it runs from the marina at Saint-François to Petite-Terre and/or Marie-Galante. Along the way you can snorkel, snack, play on the watersports equipment, or simply sunbathe. Once you reach one of the nearby islands, you'll have plenty of time to explore before the afternoon return trip.

Brudey Frères
Pointe-à-Pitre/Saint-François
☎ 88-66-67 or 90-04-48; fax 91-60-87
The Brudey brothers' boats are sleek, white, motorized catamarans equipped with air-conditioning, bar and videos. They leave the Marina de la Darse in Pointe-à-Pitre every morning at 7:45am for Marie-Galante and at 8am for Les Saintes. If you want to leave from Saint-François, you can go on Tuesday or Friday at 8am. Check the schedule to confirm the days and times, since changes occur during slow tourist seasons.

Fishing

The waters off Guadeloupe lure even non-fishermen to sea. Several captains set out on full-day and half-day trips from the marinas at Bas-du-Fort and Malendure and near the Cottage Hotel in Le Moule.

Most resorts make arrangements for private charters and book space on scheduled trips through their activities desks. Expect to pay around 3,000F/500E/$430 per boat for a full-day rental. You can set up your own trip by contacting:

Barracuda and kingfish are in season from Jan. to May, and tuna, dolphin and bonito are in season from December until March.

Caraïbe Pêche
Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 90-97-51

Evasion Exotic
Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 90-94-17 (at Bas-du-Fort marina)

Frank Nouy
Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 55-49-33

Michel
Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 85-42-17; cell 55-21-35

Ricart's Fishing Club
Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 98-75-77

Windsurfing & Other Watersports

Skilled wind- , board- and body-surfers especially like the steady winds off **Saint-François** and **Le Moule**, but you'll see boards all along the coast. International events such as the Ronde du Rhum and the Funboard World Cup take place on Guadeloupe because of the constant windy conditions, but you don't have to be competition-level to enjoy these sports. Most hotel beaches offer board rentals and lessons – look for the words *planche-à-voile* and colorful sails leaning against the huts that cater to tourists. Windsurfers rent for 50FF/8€/$7 an hour or 200FF/33€/$29 for the day.

If you want to call ahead to reserve a board for a specific time or arrange lessons, try these outfitters:

Jumbo Fun Board
Saint-François, ☎ 88-60-60

Emeraudes et Diamants
Le Moule, ☎ 23-52-67

Loisirs Nautiques (Callinago Hotel)
Pointe de la Verdure, ☎ 84-25-25

Union des Centres de Plein Air
Saint-François, ☎ 88-64-80

You can really improve your technique by booking a full-week package with U.C.P.A., which includes daily lessons from instructors who know their stuff.

Surfboards, waterskis, pedal boats, kayaks, canoes and motorboat rides are often provided free of charge to guests at most resorts. If you want more than a brief turn on the equipment, you can rent your own through the hotel beach shop. Prices are roughly 100FF/17€/$14 per 15-minute session on water skis, 75FF/13€/$11 per hour for Sunfish rental, 25FF/4€/$3 for an hour on the pedal boats, and 200FF/33€/$29 if you want to take a spin on a Hobie Cat.

Watersports Outfitters

Arawak Surf Club
Le Moule
☎ 23-60-68; fax 23-75-89; www.arawak-surf.gp; e-mail surf@outremer.com

Chez Gilles - Sports Nautiques
Marina Saint-François
☎ 88-40-13; awak@wanadoo.fr

Blue Caraïbes
Bas-du-Fort
☎ 90-86-85; fax 90-87-47; www.bleu-caraibes.com; e-mail bleucaraibes@minitel.net

Cataraïbes Evasions
Petit Bourg
☎ 95-33-62; fax 95-33-63

Hiking

Unless you're inordinately lucky, you won't see the top of **La Soufrière** (☆) during your vacation. The highest peak in the Lesser Antilles is almost always drenched in rain and sheathed in heavy clouds. If you do get a glimpse of the majestic beauty on a clear day, you'll be awed. Either way, you're sure to be drawn to the volcano and compelled to walk its slopes. Avid hikers won't be able to resist the challenge to reach its bubbling, steaming, sulfurous summit.

TIP

Leave some dry clothes in your car so you can change when you return from a hike in the rain forest.

If you plan to do a lot of hiking, buy a detailed map and get information from the park offices at the **Maison de la Forêt** or **Maison du Volcan.** Better yet, hire a professional guide who will show you the best sites and keep you away from dangerous situations.

TIP

To find a guide with experience in the national park, contact **Organisation des Guides de Montagne de la Caraïbe**, ☎ 81-24-83. Maps and brochures in English are available at the National Park office in St. Claude. ☎ 80-86-00; fax 80-05-46.

Good Hiking Strategies

- Above 1,800 feet, expect rain, even if it looks clear from ground level. Bring a hooded, waterproof jacket.
- Good athletic shoes are OK for level paths in dry weather. Boots are a must for uneven, uphill, wet or rocky trails.
- Don't carry anything in your hands. Use a backpack.
- Bring water, even if you plan a short walk. Dehydration will cause more problems than hunger. Fruit, nuts and trail mixes supply energy and are easy to carry.
- Tell someone where you plan to hike and when you expect to be back. (The receptionist at your hotel will do, if you don't know anyone else.)

The following hikes are suggested for casual hikers who intend to make short trips on well-marked trails during daylight hours. Sites marked (☆) are among the most extraordinary.

La Soufrière

Moderately challenging to strenuous. Allow approximately 1½ hours to walk around the base, an additional hour to reach the summit.

To explore La Soufrière (☆), take highway N3 from Basse-Terre City to Saint-Claude, then D11 to the parking lot of Savane des Mulets. Several trails begin from this point.

Le Chemin de Dames is the shorter of the trails and leads around to the lower west side of the volcano. It starts with a few sharp twists then straightens into a gradual ascent. About a half-hour into the walk, you'll have a terrific view of the ocean and southwestern Basse-Terre.

Farther on, you pass the North Crevice, or Great Fault, with 200-foot vertical walls. At this point, the trail divides, and you can choose to go left to complete the circuit around the base or right to reach the summit.

Around the base: The trail to the left continues past a boggy area to another split in the trail, where you turn right. (Continuing straight will bring you to the top of Mount Carmichael and, eventually to the village of Matouba.) From this point, the vegetation is mostly moss and lichen. (The red-spiked plants are called mountain pineapples.)

After you cross a rocky area the trail splits again, and you follow the blue signs to the right. This section was badly affected in 1976 when Soufrière partially erupted. On a clear day you can see Marie-Galante island from here, and the view of the southeast coast is outstanding. As you continue along, following the blue signs back to the parking lot, look for signs of the volcano's past eruptions.

To the top: If you take the summit path, to the right at the North Crevice, you have only a short, but steep, climb to the top. There, in the cold mist, you'll find an incredible landscape pitted with vents that rumble with rage and belch a nasty vapor. Fascinating.

The way down: The climb down goes quickly, and you'll have good views of Basse-Terre, the Caribbean and Les Saintes.

La Citerne

Try to ignore the telecommunication equipment that has been erected here!

Easy to moderately challenging. Allow an hour for the round-trip.

You can reach La Citerne by car, but the trail is more interesting. From the parking lot at Savane des Mulets (see previous hike), pass the Col de l'Echelle to arrive at the slope of Morne Mitan on the right. The trail begins on the left side of the road. Follow it up to the cistern, which is a round crater formed by an ancient volcano. A deep lake surrounded by thick vegetation now fills the vast cavity.

Les Chutes du Carbet 2

Easy. Leads to Second Carbet Waterfall (☆). 20 minutes to reach the waterfall, one-way.

Of the three Carbet Waterfalls, the second is the easiest to reach and, therefore, the most visited. Turn inland off highway N1 onto D4, south of Capesterre-Belle-Eau near Anse Saint-Sauveur. A mile-and-a-half past the Grand Etang, Great Pond, you'll find a parking lot where trails begin to the waterfalls.

Bridges and stairs make this well-marked trail easy to cross. You walk downhill from the parking area, which means you must walk uphill on the return, but the sight of this magnificent 360-foot cascade is well worth the effort.

Once the trail reaches the chute, you can edge a bit closer by taking the path on the right up to the rocky ledge at the foot of the waterfall. Of course, at this distance, you will get soaking wet.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

The Grand Carbet River, which feeds the three Carbet Falls, begins in La Soufrière Volcano and empties into the Caribbean at Capesterre-Belle-Eau.

Les Chutes du Carbet 1

Difficult. Leads to First Carbet Waterfall (☆). Allow 2½ hours to reach the waterfall, one-way.

The trail to the first Carbet waterfall is long and taxing, but the sight of water plunging first 377 feet then another 49 feet over the top of a towering cliff is astounding. If you're in great shape and an experienced hiker, go for it.

Pick up the trail to this chute from the same spot used to access the second waterfall. You'll hike up through thick forest after crossing the Carbet River, traverse a tributary and finally arrive at the spectacular double waterfall.

Les Chutes du Carbet 3

Moderately difficult. Leads to Third Carbet Waterfall. Allow 30 minutes to reach the waterfall, one-way.

Turn inland on D3 off N1 south of Capesterre-Belle-Eau in the direction of Routhiers. At Petit Marquisat, just past Routhiers, you'll find a wide trail leading into the mahogany forest. The trail begins rather gently, then becomes somewhat perilous about halfway to your destination. After about half an hour of hiking, you'll see the 65-foot waterfall. If you come

here before you hike to the first or second chute, you will be impressed by its beauty.

Le Grand Etang

Easy to moderate. Allow one hour, round-trip.

This large freshwater pool is on D4 off N1 south of Capesterre-Belle-Eau, before the parking lot where trails begin to the Carbet waterfalls.

WARNING

A hike around the pond is a pleasant way to enjoy the forest, but don't plan to swim. The water is full of parasites.

Pointe des Châteaux

Most people can make it to the top in less than 20 minutes.

Easy. Allow an hour for the round trip.

Even non-hikers will be tempted to reach the giant cross at the top of Pointe des Châteaux (☆). You can see it long before you get to the parking lot at the base of the cliffs, and you just know there's got to be a great view from the summit. The trail isn't strenuous, but there's no shade, and the rocks can slip underfoot.

Pick up the trail on the ocean side of the parking lot, then head either right or left (both paths get to the top) through the low, windswept vegetation along the rocky trail. At the steepest points, steps have been built into the ground. Pause at the top for a sweeping view of sheer cliffs, calm coves and crashing waves. La Désirade and Petite-Terre can be seen in the distance.

TIP

When you get back down, indulge in a scoop of delicious homemade ice cream at one of the roadside stands.

Porte d'Enfer

Difficult. Allow six hours for the round-trip.

Porte d'Enfer (☆) has a 6½-mile trail that runs along the cliffs on the far northeastern coast of Grande-Terre. You must be in good shape for this one. The ground is rough and the hike is difficult from Trou de Madame Coco south to Pointe Petit Nègre. You must return along the same route or arrange to be picked up somewhere near Mahaudière. Take food and more water than you think you'll need – and let someone know where you're going and when you'll be back.

A shorter hike of about two hours, round-trip, is from Trou de Madame Coco to Pointe du Souffleur. It's still rough going, and the trail is sometimes very near the unguarded edge of the cliffs, but the scenery and views are among the most spectacular on the island. Not a hike for anyone who suffers from vertigo.

Biking

Islanders are crazy about biking. Each August they host the 10-day international **Tour de la Guadeloupe**, and every TV on the island is tuned into the Tour de France in July. Locals train year-round, and you're sure to see them speeding along the roadways morning and evening.

If you like to ride for pleasure or fitness, you'll appreciate the smooth paved roads and relatively flat riding

surfaces on **Grande-Terre**. One drawback is the lack of paved shoulders on most roads, but drivers seem to give bikers plenty of room. Nonetheless, you'll be safer if you stick to the less-traveled back roads and uncrowded village streets.

To call Guadeloupe from outside, dial 011-590-590, then the number given in this guide; to call within the island, dial 590, then the number.

BICYCLE RENTALS	
Dingo Location, Pointe-à- Pitre	☎ 83-81-37
MM, Saint-François	☎ 88-59-12
La Guadeloupe sur Mesure Saint-François	☎ 85-54-08; fax 88-51-75
Easy Rent Location Saint-François	☎ 88-76-27
Pacific Location, Saint-François	☎ 85-51-22, 85-03-66
Karucyclo, Saint-François	☎ 82-21-39
Rent-A-Bike, Saint-François	☎ 88-51-00
Équateur Moto, Gosier	At the intersection where the road to Pointe de la Verdure meets Boulevard du Général de Gaulle.
Mobycycles Castaing Sainte-Anne	☎ 88-10-27

Golfing

There may be only one option in town, but it's a great one. The 18-hole Golf de Saint-François, designed by the prestigious Robert Trent Jones, Jr., is definitely up to par with fans of the sport. The fairways are a bit dry, but that's because this end of the island gets less rain than lush Basse-Terre. However, the lack of rain also means you probably won't get wet, and that's important when you've lugged your clubs all the way from home.

The par-71 course sprawls across 6,670 acres of seaside terrain in Saint-François, and facilities include a club house, pro shop, bar and restaurant. If you need

lessons or assistance, the pro and most of the staff speak English. Electric carts are available, and you can rent clubs.

Hotels at the far end of Avenue de l'Europe in Saint-François – **La Cocoteraie**, **Hamak** and **Méridien** – are across the street and arrange golf packages. Greens fees run about 210FF/35€/$30 for 18 holes. Phone the pro shop for a tee time, ☎ 88-41-87; fax 88-42-20.

Tennis

There's nothing quite like a brisk game of tennis early on a Guadeloupe morning when the island breeze is fresh and sea-scented, the sun isn't high enough to sting, and just knowing you're on vacation adds power to your back stroke. The only thing better is a set of doubles late in the evening after the sun goes down and hundreds of tree frogs chirp a steady rhythm in time with the bounce-hit sound of a long volley.

All major resorts on Guadeloupe have at least one tennis court, and many are lighted for night play. Real tennis buffs will want to stay at a multi-court resort. In Saint-François, the **Méridien** (☎ 88-51-00) has five and **Plantation Sainte-Marthe** (☎ 93-11-11) has four. At Sainte-Anne's Caravelle beach, **Club Med** has six courts. If you choose to stay at a smaller hotel with no court, the larger towns have public courts; visitors are welcome at the **Marina Club** in Pointe-à-Pitre, ☎ 90-84-08, and the **Centre Lamby-Lambert** in Gosier, ☎ 90-90-97.

Horseback Riding

The activities desk of your hotel is probably the best place to inquire about horseback rides and tours. Riding schools offer lessons as well as picnic outings and rain forest excursions. Horses rent for about 40FF/7€/$6 an hour, and guided tours are 175FF/29€/$25 per half-day and 350FF/58€/$50 per full day.

Use the phrase "randonnées à cheval" or "promenades à cheval" to inquire about horseback rides.

STABLES/HORSE RENTALS	
Cheval Vert, Saint-Anne	☎ 88-00-00
Le Criolo, Saint-Félix	☎ 83-38-90 or 84-04-06
Poney Club, Le Moule	☎ 24-03-74
La Manade, Saint-Claude	☎ 81-52-21
La Martingale, Baie-Mahault	☎ 26-28-39

Spa & Fitness Services

Fitness buffs can work out at their resort's gym or pick up a daily pass at one of the facilities in the larger towns. If your idea of keeping fit is lolling about while someone kneads your muscles or slathers your skin with aromatic potions, there are some wonderful spas on the island.

Two large luxurious thermal spas feature a full range of treatments:

Espace Santé de Ravine Chaude
Lamentin, ☎ 25-75-92; fax 25-76-28

Manioukani - Thalassothérapie
Marina Rivière-Sens, ☎ 99-02-02; fax 81-65-23

FITNESS CENTERS	
Espace Tonic, Pointe-à-Pitre (full-service fitness center)	☎ 83-88-34
Hotel Saint-George, Saint-Claude	☎ 80-10-10
Village Viva, Bas-du-Fort	☎ 90-98-74
Marissol, Bas-du-Fort	☎ 90-84-44
Plantation Sainte-Marthe Saint-François	☎ 93-11-11
Salako, Gosier	☎ 82-64-64

Shop Till You Drop

Guadeloupe is quickly becoming more shopper-friendly. You'll find wonderful products from France and Europe in Pointe-à-Pitre's trendy boutiques and shopping malls, but the selection is still smaller than one would hope for on a French island. Expect to save about 20% on luxury items such as perfume, crystal and designer clothes. However, prices are usually higher than in France, so if you plan on traveling to the continent, make major purchases there.

Store hours are usually 8:30am-1pm and 3-6pm. In Pointe-à-Pitre, some shops stay open through the lunch hour, and in smaller towns you may find longer midday closings.

Favorite Gift Items

Most tourists take home a bottle of Guadeloupean rum. **Domaine de Séverin**, **Montebello**, **Longueteau** and **Damoiseau** are excellent, but you'll want to taste a few and decide for yourself. If you don't have time to visit one of the distilleries, the airport has a good selection of local rums for you to purchase as you leave the island.

Other items to look for include **jewelry** made by local artisans from island coral, **dolls** dressed in madras costumes, handwoven **baskets**, **folk art**, African-style **wood carvings** and **pottery**. Cooks will want to take home a few of the **exotic spices** grown in the West Indies, and **coffee** aficionados will want a bag of island-grown beans.

TIP

The best prices and greatest selection of these items are at outdoor markets and small shops near tourist areas.

Shopping Areas

A modern 200-store shopping mall called **Destreland** is located west of the airport off the main highway in Baie Mahault. In Pointe-à-Pitre, classy boutiques are grouped around **Centre Saint-John Perse** and along Frébault, Nozières and Schoelcher streets. Two large and colorful outdoor markets are **Marché Saint Antoine** at the corner of Rue Frébault and Rue Peynier, and **Marché de la Darse**, on the waterfront at Place de la Victoire.

Pick up groceries at **Cora** in Bas-du-Fort, **Ecomax** on the beach road in Gosier, or **Match** on Avenue de l'Europe in Saint-François. On Basse-Terre, buy picnic supplies at one of the Match supermarkets. Follow the signs in Bouillante, Capesterre Belle Eau and Baillif.

Best Shops on the Island

The following stores and markets are samples of what is available on the island.

BOUTIQUE MACACA
Montauban/Gosier
☎ 84-46-55
Excellent quality lace clothing and household items.

BOUTIQUE DE LA PLAGE
Boulevard Général-de-Gaulle/Gosier
☎ 84-52-51
Sift through the trinkets and treasures to find unusual conversation pieces and a few artistic masterpieces.

CENTRE D'ART HAITIEN
Montauban/Gosier
☎ 84-32-60
High quality art by established and up-and-coming Caribbean artists is sold here.

ART DES ILES
Place Caraïbe/Pointe Noire
☎ 98-07-45
This working studio has been recognized by a Guadeloupean eco-tourism group for turning out excellent original art using more than 100 types of sand.

CENTRE DE BRODERIE
Vieux Fort
☎ 92-04-14
Prices are high, but the work is unsurpassed at this handmade lacework studio. Visitors may watch the women at work on tablecloths, napkins and other items.

To call Guadeloupe from outside, dial 011-590-590, then the number given in this guide; to call within the island, dial 590, then the number.

NEGUS
Rue Maurice Marie-Claire/Basse-Terre
☎/fax 81-65-20
Rasta artist Ras Bolongo creates original sculpture and jewelry from wood and other natural products of the island.

TROPICO LOCO
Village Atisanal/Sainte-Anne
☎ 88-96-17
Pick up a traditional Panama hat to block the Caribbean sun from the fine collection at this store.

L'ARTISAN CARIBE
Avenue de l'Europe/Saint-François
☎ 88-69-38; fax 88-65-43
Crafts, including hand-carved chess sets, and wall hangings are the stand-out buys here.

COLIPAYS
Pointe Pitre
☎ 90-09-09; fax 90-09-09
Share the island's beauty by sending something unique to a friend back home. This little shop ships indigenous flowers anywhere.

JOSY MAKOKO
Rue Montauban/Gosier
☎ 84-63-18; fax 84-16-73
Lace, lace, and more lace. You'll be fascinated by the lovely lace clothes in this shop.

SEBASTIANO
multiple locations
☎ 81-52-48 or 83-14-80
Look for these shops in most of the larger towns. The stores are known for well-priced, good-quality shirts, jeans, shorts, and other warm-weather clothing.

Madras

This lightweight cotton fabric was brought to Guadeloupe in the late 1800s by indentured servants imported from India. At that time, whites on the island wore European-style clothing, while blacks wore ragged outfits made at home from grain sacks and discarded canvas. When the Indian workers arrived with an affordable fabric, the former slaves quickly adapted it to their own styles.

Madras, after which the fabric is named, is a major textile producing city on the Bay of Bengal in southeast India.

The result was a unique fashion that mixed Indian fabric with Victorian-European trends and native African influences. Today, islanders dress in this colorful costume for special events and holidays. Women usually wear a white blouse with a madras shawl over their shoulders, a madras skirt over several petticoats, and a madras headdress.

The madras headdress actually sends a message depending on how it is tied. If you decide to buy a traditional cap, be aware that one point means you do not have a significant other and your heart is available. Two points signify that you're committed to another, and three points denote marriage. If you see a cap with four points, it means that the wearer is married but....

After Dark

Casinos

Both Gosier and Saint-François have casinos that offer entertainment and American-style roulette, blackjack and slot machines. You must be at least 18 years old and show identification to get in. While appropriate dress is requested, almost anything other than swimsuits or shorts will work, and most choose to wear casual resort-type clothes.

Casino de Gosier
Pointe de la Verdure, ☎ 84-79-68
11am-2am, Monday-Thursday; 2pm-3am, Friday and Saturday; Closed Sunday.

Casino de Saint-François
Avenue de l'Europe, ☎ 88-41-31; fax 88-41-44. Noon-2am, Sunday-Thursday; 2pm-3am, Friday and Saturday.

Theater & Music

CENTRE DES ARTS ET DE LA CULTURE
Place des Martyrs et de la Liberté
Pointe-à-Pitre, ☎ 82-79-78; fax 91-76-45
E-mail centre.arts@wanadoo.fr

This arts center presents all types of plays, movies, dance productions and music concerts. Jazz and classical programs are especially popular, and international stars such as Miles Davis and Dave Brubeck have appeared here. Call or fax in advance for a schedule of upcoming performances.

Bars, Nightclubs & Discos

Most of Guadeloupe's nightlife is centered around the resorts and restaurants along the south coast of Grande-Terre. Large hotels have discos and schedule frequent theme dinners that include dancing or entertainment. The larger towns often put on street fairs or holiday celebrations that include music performed by the island's top bands. Zouk, reggae and soca are the beat of choice at the moment, but the beguine remains popular on the dance floor year after year.

A new *boîte de nuit* opens as often as another closes, so an up-to-date listing is difficult to compile. Ask at your hotel or the tourist office about the best bars and clubs that offer the type of entertainment you enjoy.

The legal drinking age on Guadeloupe is 18.

TIP

If in doubt, head for the nearest marina. Plenty of friendly people hang out around the cafés and bars near the water.

Use the following hot-spot list as a general guide.

Akademie Duka
Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 90-88-44
Make reservations for the folk ballet performed at this Marissol Hotel club each Monday evening. The music and costumes are spectacular.

Caraïbes 2
Bas-du-Fort, ☎ 90-85-27
The crowd here is into Brazilian music. Dancing gets started about 10:30pm and goes until dawn.

Wear something chic to Le Bar.

Le Bar de l'Auberge de la Vieille Tour
Gosier, ☎ 84-23-23
This piano bar built around the stone ruins of a 200-year-old sugar mill is the classiest spot on the island. Friday nights are especially popular with guests at this luxury hotel, so arrive early.

Le Figuier Vert
Gosier, ☎ 85-85-51
Jazz lovers will enjoy the live bands that play here every Friday and Saturday night.

Planet Caraïbes
Gosier, ☎ 84-72-79
The Caribbean Planet is popular with the trendsetters who enjoy all the latest music from the islands.

Zenith
Gosier, ☎ 90-72-04
This longtime favorite specializes in music by bands from the West Indies.

Le Médicis
Gosier, ☎ 84-02-83
Enjoy great cocktails at this piano bar where jazz is king.

Le Coquillage
Sainte-Anne, ☎ 88-00-81
If you're not shy, you can join in with the karaoke singers at this dance club near the water.

Mini Beach
Sainte-Anne, ☎ 88-21-13
On Tuesday nights, this hotel restaurant throws a barbecue with piano bar entertainment.

La Case Amélie
Pointe-Noire, ☎ 99-91-48
You'll know you've really *gone island* when you stop at this colorful house on the main road on a Saturday night. It's full of island music, island art, island hospitality and island ambiance.

Shiva 1
La Baie/ Le Moule, ☎ 25-53-39
This stunning club named for the Lord of the Dance draws a crowd of beautiful people.

La Cascade
Gosier, ☎ 84-33-69
Follow the zouk to this legendary hot spot.

New Land
Gosier, ☎ 84-34-91
Locals and visitors keep this club popular year after year. The place wakes up around 11 each night.

La Plantation
Gourbeyre, ☎ 81-23-37
On Basse-Terre, the quiet side of the island, this club draws a classy crowd of nightowls.

Best Places to Stay

Finding the perfect headquarters for your Guadeloupean vacation is tough, simply because the island is so diverse and sprawling. You have plenty of choices – perhaps too many. Consider dividing your time between two locations. If you want to include one of the outer islands, it's not a bad idea to book three reservations. The trouble of packing up

and moving every few days is easily offset by the extra time you gain in each locale.

During peak tourist season, some hotels and guesthouses require a three-night minimum stay. This still allows you to move once during a week's vacation, so you can spend a few days diving or exploring the national park on Basse-Terre, then enjoy some time on Grande-Terre's south-coast beaches.

A Look at the Options

Hotels & Resorts

Each hotel and resort on Guadeloupe and the outer islands is awarded one to four stars, as in France, depending on the level of service, quality of accommodations, and the number of amenities. We avoid star ratings in this book because only recommended properties are listed, and readers are encouraged to select lodging based on detailed reviews rather than simple classifications.

The Relais Créole Group

Small and medium-sized hotels constructed and decorated in traditional West Indian style belong to this group. These properties are often moderately priced, family-run, and meet high standards of comfort. We list only the best Relais Créole choices.

Gîtes

If you really want to "go-island" (i.e., give up some amenities in exchange for blissed-out solitude on less money), think about a gîte. There are about 400 of

these accommodations on Guadeloupe. They range from modest, homelike cottages that rent for as little as $150 per week (week, not day) to multi-bedroom houses with modern kitchens and baths that cost about $2,000 per week. A few are listed below, and you can get a complete list from ***Gîtes de France*** on Guadeloupe, ☎ 91-64-33; fax 91-45-40; or go online at www.gites-en-france.com/guadeloupe.html or www.holidayshomes.com/antilles.html.

Villas

A compromise option between a basic gîte and a luxury resort is a self-contained villa. Many of these combine the homey roominess of a gîte with extra frills such as air conditioning, pools, gardens – maybe even maid service and an ocean view. Expect to pay $2,000 or more per week, depending on size and facilities. This choice is especially popular with large families and groups who share expenses. Rental properties are listed with local tourist offices and agencies such as ***Association des Villas et Meublés de Tourisme***, ☎ 82-02-62, fax 82-56-65, and **Dock Villas**, ☎ 84-34-77, fax 84-34-77. Or go online at www.frenchcaribbean.com/guadeloupelodgingmap.html.

Package Vacations

Look into the possibility of securing a fixed-cost vacation package that includes air fare and accommodations, since they usually offer some type of advantageous pricing. The concept of all-inclusive resorts hasn't caught on in the French islands as well as it has elsewhere, so you're not likely to find three meals per day in any package deal. However, the French have a fine tradition of enjoying rolls and cof-

fee first thing in the morning, so many hotel rates include continental breakfast.

Many hotels and resorts offer dollar-saving packages for honeymooners, divers and groups. In addition, virtually every property reduces its rates during the off-season. If you're flexible about the exact date of your vacation, you can often bargain for a rock-bottom price by phoning the hotel directly and asking if they offer last-minute rates on nights when occupancy is expected to be low.

Pricing

The following price scale is intended as a guideline to help you choose lodging to fit your vacation budget. It is based on the cost of a double room per night during high-season, which normally runs mid-December through Easter week. As in France, taxes and service charges are included. Most hotels accept major credit cards, but be aware that small inns, rental agencies and individual villa owners may require cash or money order – probably in euros.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Expensive	$150-$200/170€-227€
Moderate	$100-$150/116€-170€
Inexpensive	Less than $100/116€

Grande-Terre

There is really no reason to stay in Pointe-à-Pitre unless you simply prefer big cities or must be near the major business district. Gosier's well-developed resort area is just over five miles from the airport and about

three miles from the center of Pointe-à-Pitre, so you can stay in the nicer suburb and still be close to the island's hub. Other resort areas are farther out, but most feature a variety of restaurants and easy access to the most popular leisure activities with the added *tranquillité* of a small village.

Plan to stay in Pointe-à-Pitre or the nearby town of Gosier if you intend to walk, taxi or group-tour.

Most of Grande-Terre's hotels are along the southern beaches. They range from luxurious mega-resorts to laid-back island-style inns.

Expect to spend from $150 to $300 per night for a double room at the most lavish properties, from $100 to $150 at the less pricey resorts, and around $60 to $75 for a pleasant room at an average hotel with all the basics but none of the glitz.

All rates are approximate.

The following are only a few of the many accommodations available on Grande-Terre. Each was chosen as a good value in its price range, and each measures up to US-style expectations – some more than others. In addition, some or all of the staff speak English, and the management is eager to attract American tourists. Space does not allow every property which meets these standards to be listed, but we give at least one choice in each price category within most developed areas of Grande-Terre.

Point-à-Pitre

HOTEL ANCHORAGE SAINT-JOHN PERSE
Quai des Coisières
44 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 82-51-57; fax 82-52-61; www.saint-john-perse.com
Moderate

Choose this Anchorage-chain hotel with all the basic comforts if you want to be literally in the center of Guadeloupean action. The rooms are smallish, but

To call Guadeloupe from outside, dial 011-590-590, then the number given in this guide; to call within the island, dial 590, then the number.

they have air-conditioning, satellite TV, phone and a view of the Centre Saint-John Perse waterfront complex. Cruise ships dock across the street, taxis stand ready outside the front door, and all of Pointe-à-Pitre is within walking distance. There's a coffee shop on the main floor, and complimentary continental breakfast every morning.

Bas-du-Fort/Gosier

The island's largest marina is located at Bas-du-Fort, just east of Pointe-à-Pitre before you reach the town of Gosier. There are a few good, reasonably-priced hotels in this area that are popular with Americans as well as Europeans because of their resort facilities and close-to-the-city location.

NOVOTEL FLEUR D'EPEE
Bas-du-Fort, Gosier 97190
190 rooms
Full American breakfast
☎ 90-40-00; fax 90-99-07
US: Accor/Resinter, ☎ 800-221-4542; fax 914-472-0451
E-mail novotel@outremer.com
Moderate/Expensive

Point-à-Pitre is a bit sleazy at night. Take extra safety precautions.

Only two miles from Pointe-à-Pitre, the Fleur d'Epée has a fantastic beach-side setting on 17 acres of tropical gardens. All the rooms are air-conditioned and open onto a balcony that overlooks the ocean, pool or gardens. You'll have all the upper-end amenities here, such as a direct-dial telephone, in-room safe, radio, TV and access to all resort facilities.

Indeed, it's the resort facilities that make this hotel special. Palm trees provide shade on the white-sand beach, thatch umbrellas hang over two swimming pools, and lights allow night play on the tennis courts. Guests have complimentary access to windsurfer

boards, sea kayaks and snorkel equipment, and the recreation staff is always planning a volleyball match or table tennis tournament.

You don't even have to leave the property to enjoy a great meal. There are two restaurants – **Jardin des Tropiques** and **Alamanda** – and a couple of bars serving food and drinks indoors or at the pool and beach. Several evenings each week the hotel offers theme dinners, dancing and live entertainment.

If you have kids, schedule your visit during the French school holidays. That's when the Ti Pirate Club organizes activities to amuse children from six to 12 years old. Parents are then free to schedule deep-sea fishing, scuba diving, sailing or sightseeing trips through the Touloulou Plage Discovery Desk. You can even rent a car on-site and head out for a day trip.

MARISSOL
Bas-du-Fort, Gosier 97190
150 rooms; 50 bungalows
Full American breakfast
☎ 90-84-44; fax 90-83-32
US (Accor/Resinter): ☎ 800-221-4542; fax 914-472-0451
Moderate/Expensive

Marissol is the next-door neighbor of Novotel Fleur d'Epée, so its rooms and bungalows also face the sea across a wide white-sand beach on acres of lush grounds.

The rooms are decorated in lovely Caribbean colors with air-conditioning, direct dial phone, radio, watersports, tennis, lawn bowling and island excursions.

When hunger strikes while you're stretched out on a lawn chair or between sets in a volleyball game, head

Guests of the Marissol and the Novotel, you may use the facilities of both.

for **Le Sicali Restaurant** on the beach – swimwear welcome. An outdoor bar is located nearby, and another, the Wahoo, sits close to the swimming pool.

Pointe de la Verdure/Gosier

Take the second Gosier exit off N4 after leaving Pointe-à-Pitre onto D119, which will take you to this quiet beach area. Watch closely for signs to Route des Hotels and Pointe de la Verdure before you reach the downtown area. The road branches to the right and leads to several lovely hotels situated along beautiful white-sand beaches.

LE CLIPPER
Pointe de la Verdure, Gosier 97190
88 rooms, three suites
Buffet breakfast
☎ 84-01-75; fax 84-38-15
www.karibea.com/hotelleclipper.htm
E-mail leclipper@hotelleclipper.com
Moderate

Built to resemble a ship, this new beachfront hotel offers pleasant air-conditioned accommodations with ocean views from private balconies. Light-wood furnishings and white-tiled floors give the rooms a cool, ultra-modern ambience – the perfect retreat after a day in the sun. Bathrooms are equipped with hair dryers, and every room has a coffee maker, refrigerator, and television.

On-site facilities include a large pool that seems to disappear into the ocean. Nearby, La Vigie Restaurant serves a full American-style buffet breakfast each morning, and Créole-inspired cuisine for lunch and dinner. Bar La Vigie, which is adjacent to the restaurant serves drinks and snacks throughout the day.

Both the bar and restaurant are open to the garden, pool, and beach.

A well-stocked sports center offers complimentary snorkeling gear and non-motorized water toys. Other water sports can be arranged for a fee. Tennis and kids programs are available to guests at nearby sister hotel, Salako.

LA CREOLE BEACH HOTEL
Pointe de la Verdure, Gosier 97190
156 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 90-46-46; fax 90-46-66
In the US: French Caribbean Int'l, ☎ 800-322-2223; fax 805-967-7798 or Leader Hotels, ☎ 800-742-4276
www.creole-beach.gp
E-mail creolebeach@leaderhotels.gp
Expensive

You're right on the beach in true Créole-style comfort when you sign in here. The decor is French colonial with rich natural wood and dazzling colors set in the midst of a tropical park six miles from the airport. Rooms are air-conditioned and furnished with two queen-size beds, direct-line telephone, TV and minibar. Downtown Gosier is less than a mile away, but there's no need to leave the Verdure area. The Caribbean's largest Hobie Cat center is on the resort grounds, and you can also windsurf, waterski, dive and partake in a number of land activities. There's a putting green.

Three restaurants serve everything from pizza to continental gourmet. **Alizés** prepares Créole dishes at your table; **Le Zawag** allows you to choose a lobster from their tank; and **Case à Pizzas** turns out pancakes and pizza beachside all afternoon. In the evening, there's usually a live-music or folk-dance show.

HOTEL MAHOGANY
Pointe de la Verdure, Gosier 97190
60 studios and suites
☎ 90-46-46; fax 90-46-66
In the US: French Caribbean Int'l, ☎ 800-322-2223; fax 805-967-7798 or Leader Hotels, ☎ 800-742-4276
www.mahogany.gp
E-mail creolebeach@leaderhotels.gp
Studios – Expensive; Suites – Deluxe

The Mahogany shares a beach, garden and facilities with La Créole Beach Hôtel. Rooms are a bit pricier here, but they are actually more than mere rooms. The six single-level suites have two bedrooms, a jacuzzi, kitchen and balcony with an ocean view. The 12 split-level suites have a bedroom upstairs and a living room, kitchenette and balcony downstairs. Even the 46 studios have kitchenettes, patios and king-size beds. All are air-conditioned and come with cable TV and telephone.

★ NOTE

A third hotel, Les Résidences Yucca, shares facilities on Grand-Baie Beach with La Créole Beach Hôtel and Hôtel Mahogany. At the Yucca, each of the 100 studios has a kitchenette built against one wall of the patio. Moderate price range. All three properties have the same contact information.

ARAWAK FRANTEL
Pointe de la Verdure, Gosier 97190
150 rooms and suites
Continental breakfast
☎ 84-24-24; fax 84-38-45
Moderate

If you get a room on the lower floor with an ocean view, you may not notice the group-tour atmosphere.

At first glance, you may wonder why anyone would want to stay at this unremarkable high-rise, and there's only one good answer – penthouse. Actually, there are six huge top-floor suites with majestic views of the Grande-Terre Riviera.

If you want to go into town, the bus stop is nearby.

Even the rooms *ordinaire* are comfortable in an institutional sort of way. All have air-conditioning, radio, and TV.

Outdoors you'll find watersports, lighted tennis courts and a large swimming pool. The restaurant serves international and Créole cuisine accompanied by nightly entertainment. You have a choice of three bars and two boutiques. You can book an appointment at the beauty salon, rent a car, work out at the fitness center, or try your luck at the casino.

So, while there aren't any to-die-for features (unless you're in one of the suites), the Arawak has everything you need, and the seaside location is outstanding.

CANELLA BEACH RESIDENCE
Pointe de la Verdure, Gosier 97190
146 rooms and suites
☎ 90-44-00; fax 90-44-44
In the US: ☎ French Caribbean International, ☎ 800-322-2223; fax 805-967-7798
www.frenchcaribbean.com
Inexpensive/Moderate

You won't feel like a monolingual fish out of water at Canella Beach. The staff at this West-Indian-style village understand Americans and like them. Surround-

ings are pleasant. The studios and suites have small kitchenettes on the balconies, and there are tennis courts and a pool. The beach, west of the Créole Beach complex, is less outstanding than neighboring coves, but all the typical watersports are available, and there's a water-side bar.

The restaurant at Canella recently upgraded its food and service, and is now one of the highlights of the resort.

Downtown Gosier & Surrounding Area

L'AUBERGE DE LA VIEILLE TOUR
Route de Montauban, Gosier 97190
180 rooms
Full American breakfast
☎ 84-23-23; fax 84-33-43
In the US: French Caribbean International, ☎ 800-322-2223; fax 805-967-7798; or Accor/Resinter, ☎ 800-221-4542; fax 914-472-0451
www.frenchcaribbean.com
Expensive/Deluxe

The decor here is French colonial, with dark teak furniture, ceiling fans and shutter doors.

On the main road (D119) leading into Gosier, just before you enter downtown, you'll see the stone-tower landmark of one of the most wonderful resorts on the island. The *vieille tour* (old tower) around which the modern *auberge* (inn) is built was once a sugar mill. Contemporary structures now encompass parts of the 18th-century factory, which sits in a sprawling garden overlooking the sea. Every room is air-conditioned and has a terrace, minibar, TV, direct-dial telephone and safe. Three new two-room suites have ocean views from every angle, even the bathrooms.

Other outstanding beaches are also within walking distance from La Vieille Tour.

The hotel, now part of the Sofitel Group, features a large swimming pool, a wading pool, private beach,

lighted tennis courts and three restaurants. **La Vieille Tour Restaurant** is adjacent to the old mill and serves luscious gourmet meals. On the beach, the more casual **Ajoupa Café** prepares Créole dishes such as stuffed crab and spicy grilled fish during the day.

If all this isn't enough to keep you satisfied, the resort is only three blocks from downtown Gosier, which has many restaurants and night spots.

In the evening, the nearby **Le Zagaya Restaurant** serves Créole-style dinners.

LES TERRASSES DE L'ILET
33 Boulevard Amédée-Clara, Gosier 97190
☎ 84-79-00; fax 84-06-87
E-mail prime.invest@wanadoo.fr
Moderate/Expensive

The bungalows here are on a terraced hillside above the bay overlooking l'Ilet Gosier. Each cabin has two rooms, a patio, air-conditioning, TV and a small kitchen. The staff speaks English and is happy to arrange excursions, car rental – even secretarial or baby-sitting services. Up to four people can stay in each cabin, but they are suited more for family groups than friends traveling together.

LES FLAMBOYANTS
Chemin des Phares et Balises, Gosier 97190
18 rooms/studios
Continental breakfast
☎ 84-14-11; fax 84-53-56
Inexpensive

The view is great from this old villa, which has gained a reputation for providing simple, clean rooms at rock-bottom rates. This charming place offers a pleasant garden with a pool looking out to the bay. You can choose between a simple room or a small studio with a kitchenette. All rooms are air-conditioned and have a

private bath, and there is a reception area with a TV. The closest beach is about 1½ miles away.

RESIDENCE TURQUOISE
33 Boulevard Amédée-Clara, Gosier 97190
8 units (studios to three-bedroom apartments)
☎ 84-79-00; fax 84-06-87
E-mail prime.invest@wanadoo.fr
Inexpensive/Moderate

Eight units are available in this homey apartment house. Most of the bedrooms have a view of a quiet patio and the living room terraces overlook l'Ilet du Gosier. The apartments offer air-conditioning and private baths. There are dishwashers and microwave ovens in the units with full kitchens.

Between Gosier & St. Anne

CAP SUD CARAIBES
Route de la Plage, Petite Havre
12 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 85-96-02; fax 85-80-39
Moderate

Relais Créoles are small inns, usually run by a family and priced moderately. They offer more island ambiance and tradition than the larger hotels.

If you're looking for a good location at a great price, this little inn – a member of the Relais Créole group – is a terrific choice. It has a hillside view halfway between Gosier and Sainte-Anne. This, combined with air-conditioning, swimming pool, airport shuttle and personalized small-inn attention, adds up to a real bargain. Each room is decorated in a unique style and has a private bathroom with either a tub or shower. The Petit Havre beach is just down the hill.

LE PETIT HAVRE
Route de la Plage, Petit Havre
12 rooms
Meal plans available
☎ 85-20-83; fax 85-20-43
E-mail pthavre@www.softel.fr
Inexpensive

When you arrive at this small hotel in the heights outside Gosier you'll be greeted with a smile and a drink. The beach is just a short distance away, and the inn enjoys an advantageous view of Basse-Terre, the sea and nearby islands. More like a home than a hotel, Petit Havre has a pool, a solarium and a restaurant that specializes in both Créole and French cuisine. All rooms have air-conditioning, TV, private bath and balcony. This is a terrific bargain.

Sainte-Anne

CLUB MED CARAVELLE
Caravelle Beach, Sainte-Anne 97180
322 rooms
All inclusive
☎ 85-49-50; fax 85-49-70
In the US: ☎ 800-CLUB MED, 212-977-2100; fax 212-315-5392
Expensive

Club Med is legendary, and not much more needs to be said. If all-inclusive indulgence does it for you, this is the place to be. Caravelle Beach is a crescent-shaped pillow of sand hidden among tropical gardens well off the road outside Sainte-Anne. The rooms have beach or garden views, air-conditioning, and one king-size or two full-size beds. The decor is Créole. There are two restaurants and a couple of bars. Every watersport and most land sports are available free of charge and after dark there's dancing and entertain-

Club Med is closed from August until mid-December each year.

ment. Families are welcome at Caravelle, and there are a lot of activities planned for kids. However, clothes are optional on the beach, and most guests are young, carefree singles or couples.

LA TOUBANA
Durivage, Sainte-Anne 97180
32 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 88-25-78; fax 88-38-90
US: Island Hideaways, ☎ 888-832-2302; www.greencay.com; or French Caribbean International, ☎ 800-322-2223; www.toubana.gp.
Moderate

Twenty garden-view and 12 ocean-view bungalows sit on lovely tropical grounds with a view of the sea. Patrick Vial-Collet oversees this hilltop retreat with loving devotion to detail. You'll enjoy the three-tier swimming pool where a buffet breakfast is served. All bungalows are decorated in pastel colors and open onto a terrace with a private garden. The bedrooms are air-conditioned and have either two twin-size or one king-size bed. Each little cabana is self-contained with a kitchenette and bath, so there is a feeling of privacy – perfect for romantic getaways. You never have to leave the property because the on-site restaurant serves lunch and dinner, and the beachside bar provides entertainment and tempting island drinks.

Créole-Style Bargains

If you're looking for a Créole bargain, Sainte-Anne has several options. Try the nine-room **Mini Beach Hôtel** on the water (air-conditioning, but no pool), ☎ 88-21-13; fax 88-19-29; or the 13-room **Auberge du Grand Large** (air-conditioning, pool, but no beach), ☎ 85-48-28; fax 88-16-69.

LE ROTABAS
Caravelle Beach, Sainte-Anne 97180
44 rooms and bungalows
Continental breakfast
☎ 88-25-60; fax 88-26-87
Inexpensive

Madame Kacy runs this little garden-village with true Créole hospitality. It's near the water and offers a pool and two restaurants – one with a white-sand floor – that specialize in island dishes. The open-air reception area is full of lush greenery.

Le Rotabas is a favorite hang- out for families & groups.

VERGER DE SAINTE-ANNE
5 Marguerite, Sainte-Anne 97180
Six bungalows
☎ 88-27-56; fax 88-21-45
E-mail verger@le-verger.gp
Inexpensive

Return guests are common at this place where everyone feels at home. Owner Danièle Granger greets new arrivals with a smile and a glass of her special Verger punch, then sets about helping to organize island excursions. You'll stay in one of six white vine-covered bungalows. There are three sizes, but each has a kitchenette, TV, air-conditioning and patio. The largest unit has two bathrooms. Guests have access to the communal carbet, which features a coffee machine, ice, dishwasher, washing machine and barbecue grill.

Carbets

A carbet is a large covered patio outfitted with a sink, table, chairs, coffee maker and mini-refrigerator. Some also have cooktops, microwaves and, sometimes, a dishwasher. This common addition to island accommodations is convenient for everyone and a real boon for those on a budget.

Bois Jolan beach is less than a mile away. The minimum stay is three days and you save by booking for a week or more.

Between Sainte-Anne & Saint-François

PIERRE ET VACANCES
La Pointe de Helleux, Sainte Anne 97180
276 apartments
Continental breakfast
☎ 47-00-00; fax 47-00-01
http://194.51.125.60/gb/sainteanne.html
Inexpensive

Families love this recently opened apartment-hotel village set at the edge of two beaches between the towns of Sainte-Anne and Saint-François. As a member of the well-known French resort chain of the same name, the hotel caters to French vacationers, so you will have a fine opportunity to practice your vocabulary, if you decide to stay here.

Roomy air-conditioned apartments are grouped into two-story buildings surrounded by palm-shaded gardens. Each is decorated in West Indies style and features a well-equipped kitchenette. Guests have a choice of four restaurants, four bars, two pools, a playground, and a long list of planned activities, including supervised programs for children and teens.

Complimentary lounge chairs, snorkel equipment, and volleyball are available at the beach, and guests may participate in a variety of free fitness classes. Friendly, somewhat-bilingual activity directors arrange for watersports, hiking, golf, horseback riding, and sightseeing tours during the day. At night, theme dinners, dancing, and live entertainment keep vacationers busy.

ANCHORAGE
Anse des Rochers, Saint-François 97118
356 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 93-90-00; fax 93-91-00
In the US: French Caribbean International, ☎ 800-322-2223; fax 805-967-7798
www.frenchcaribbean.com
Expensive

This is Guadeloupe's largest hotel, and it sprawls in all directions over two beaches and 27 acres (it's a long haul from one end to the other). The villas have kitchenettes, and all rooms have air-conditioning. In addition, every amenity imaginable is on-site – watersports, restaurant, buffet, snack bar, live evening entertainment, disco, a gigantic pool with a waterfall, tennis courts, volleyball courts and several boutiques. Families love this place. There's always something to do without ever leaving the property.

If you want to tour the island, there's a car rental office and an excursion desk to take care of everything.

Saint-François

LE HAMAK
Avenue de l'Europe, Saint-François 97118
54 bungalows
Full breakfast
☎ 88-59-99; fax 88-41-92
In the US: Caribbean Inns, Inc., ☎ 800-633-7411; fax 803-7411
E-mail hotel.hamak@wanadoo.fr
www.caribbean-inns.com
Expensive/Deluxe

It's expensive, but in its class, this is a top-notch special-occasion bargain. The bungalows are strewn over seven acres of lush gardens tucked between the island's only 18-hole golf course and the white sands of a small private beach. The resort's most alluring

Le Hamak has been remodeled and opened under new management in November 2001.

features are the opportunity for privacy, the casual but classy atmosphere, and the friendly but unintrusive attentiveness. And the hammocks – they might be the best part of all. Every porch has one, and you're expected to use it for lounging in stately indolence.

Every bungalow is air-conditioned and has a kitchenette with a refrigerator. The bathrooms are a bit small, but there are separate toilet areas and an additional outdoor shower for each unit, so you never feel crowded. If you want a bit of socializing, head for the bar or restaurant where the finest cuisine and beverages are served.

LA COCOTERAIE
Avenue de l'Europe, Saint-François 97118
52 suites
Full breakfast
☎ 88-79-81; fax 88-78-33
E-mail cocoteraie@wanadoo.fr
www.caribbean-inns.com
In the US: Robert Reid Reservations, ☎ 800-223-6510; fax 402-399-9285
Deluxe

This is fantasy-like elegance at its best. Manager Fidel Montana is shamelessly honest about his aspirations to run the finest resort on Guadeloupe – or maybe in the Caribbean. No detail escapes his notice, and no guest request eludes his attention. He changes the decor around the gorgeous colonial-style buildings seemingly on a whim, and each suite is on a strict refurbishing schedule. While the resort has an enviable reputation in Europe, Montana hopes to lure more guests from the United States by employing an affable English-speaking staff and keeping abreast of American preferences. He's doing a fine job, since anyone, American or otherwise, would have difficulty finding fault with the resort.

The location is ideal – across the street from the only golf course on the island and at the edge of one of the most beautiful beaches on Grande-Terre. The suites are exquisite – large, sunny, airy, with soft madras colors, rich mahogany furniture and wonderful octagonal bathtubs looking out to the ocean. First-floor suites feature French doors opening onto wraparound patios, while second-story units have raised ceilings and large balconies.

Both the restaurant and the poolside bar have the best wine list on the island.

The immense pool has a swim-up bar where guests can order a limitless variety of refreshments. Elegant blue-and-white Chinese vases decorate the surrounding deck area, which has comfortable white lounge chairs shaded by white umbrellas. Altogether, it's a scene out of a decorator's magazine. Just past the pool, the low hum of international conversation spills from **La Varangue Restaurant**. This charming spot is in a spacious pavilion open to the sea breezes and fragrant with the aroma of grilled specialties.

Guests can sail on the private catamaran, play tennis or golf (across the street), and use all the sports facilities at Le Méridien Hotel next door.

LE MERIDIEN
Avenue de l'Europe, Saint-François 97118
263 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 88-51-00; fax 88-40-71
E-mail gmptp@powerantilles.com
In the US: ☎ 800-543-4300
Deluxe

When you check into a Méridien Hotel anywhere in the world, you expect four-star features and you get them at this high-rise right on the beach. There's so much going on here, you'll have to check the closed-circuit TV for regular updates on what's happening. Of course, all rooms and suites are outfitted with the

latest amenities, and the balconies offer wonderful views of the sea or gardens.

The golf course, marina, casino and charter-only airport are nearby; and there are tennis courts, pool, playground, boutiques and beauty services on the hotel grounds.

For both Créole and French meals **The Balaou Restaurant** serves buffet dinners; **Casa Zomar** is open for lunch; and the **Bambou Café** offers light meals and snacks. After dark, the disco is open for dancing and entertainment.

PLANTATION SAINTE-MARTHE
Avenue de l'Europe, Saint-François 97118
120 rooms and duplexes
Breakfast buffet
☎ 93-11-11 or 88-43-58; fax 88-72-47
US: Robert Reid, ☎ 800-223-6510; fax 402-399-9285
Expensive

In the 19th century, when sugar meant sweet success to landowners, one of the largest plantations in Guadeloupe sat on what is known as les Hauts de Saint François overlooking the Vallée d'Or. Today a splendid resort sits on these grounds, in the heights above the town, overlooking the valley of gold. Four two-level Créole manor-house-style buildings spread over a shady garden with all the comforts of the 21st century, including satellite TV and hair dryer. The reception area is knockout gorgeous and the pool is gigantic. If you rent a duplex, the bedroom is a loft above the living room. Tennis courts and a fitness center are on-site, and a shuttle runs to the beaches and golf course from 9am until 5pm daily. In the evening, the shuttle takes guests to the casino and marina restaurants in town.

Kids at Sainte-Marthe can take part in mini-club activities during school holidays, leaving parents free during the day.

A breakfast buffet is served near the pool each morning, and **La Vallée d'Or** restaurant is open for lunch and dinner.

KAYE LA HOTEL
Marina, Saint-François 97118
75 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 85-10-10; fax 88-74-67
Inexpensive/Moderate

The rooms are basic, but spacious, comfortable and air-conditioned. Each has TV and direct-dial phone and all are right next to the pier. There's a pool, and the beach is within walking distance. Probably the best thing about this hotel, in addition to its price, is its proximity to the excursion boats that leave the marina early in the morning for day-trips to other islands. There are two restaurants at the hotel and many other restaurants and bars line the walk around the marina.

If you prefer an apartment, the same management runs Residence Port Marina, a new building with 33 air-conditioned units for up to four people. Guests have use of facilities at the Kayé La Hotel and the rates per person work out a bit less when the apartment rate is divided by four.

LE GOLF MARINE CLUB
Avenue de l'Europe, Saint-François 97118
70 rooms, including 29 duplexes
Continental breakfast
☎ 88-60-60; fax 85-51-43
E-mail golfmarine@leaderhotels.gp
www.golf-marine.gp/index-us.htm
Inexpensive

This basic but comfortable resort faces the only golf course on the island. All the rooms and two-level duplexes have air-conditioning, bathroom with tub,

terrace, TV and either two twin-size beds or one king-size bed. The duplex suites have sofa beds as well.

Guests stay here for the golf, and there's also a pool and a tennis court, but no beach. Plantation Sainte-Marthe hotel offers a free shuttle service to its restaurants and bars, and all that Saint-François has to offer is within walking distance.

PALADIEN MANGANAO RESORT
Le Lieu dit Bellevue, Saint-François 97118
241 rooms
☎ 88-80-00; fax 88-80-01
Expensive/Deluxe

Brand new and first class, this beachfront resort is a nice addition to popular Saint-François. The air-conditioned rooms have the usual creature comforts, and on-site facilities include four tennis courts, a health club, boutiques, three restaurants, two bars, a disco and a swimming pool.

Le Moule

COTTAGE HOTEL
Le Moule, Route de la Plage des Alizés
24 rooms
Meals available at additional charge
☎ 23-78-38; fax 23-78-39
E-mail info@cottage-hotel.net
www.cottage-hotel.net
Moderate

Almost two miles of fine white sand line Alizés Beach in the town of Le Moule, and an offshore coral reef blocks a lagoon from rough Atlantic waves. Here, the newly built Cottage Hotel offers casual accommodations with ocean views.

Each unit is furnished with two sleeper sofas in a downstairs living area. This opens onto a private pa-

tio that doubles as an open-air kitchenette. An air-conditioned loft bedroom has an adjoining bath. Guests who prefer not to cook can enjoy meals and drinks in the hotel's Créole-style restaurant and bar, overlooking the lagoon.

TIP

If you want to spend time on Basse-Terre, you're looking at a long haul – something you probably don't want to tackle more than once or twice during a week's vacation.

Basse-Terre

Petit-Bourg & La Route de la Traversée

L'AUBERGE DE LA DISTILLERIE
Sommet Route de Versailles
12 rooms and three bungalows
Full breakfast
☎ 94-25-91; fax 94-11-91
In the US: ☎ 800-373-6246
Moderate

The location of this delightful inn surrounded by pineapple fields couldn't be better. It's a quick drive from the bridge that connects to Grande-Terre and the south-coast beaches, and it's just north of the Route de la Traversée that leads to the national park.

Each of the 12 rooms is air-conditioned and has a TV, phone, small refrigerator and a hammock set up on a private balcony. A covered patio near the outdoor pool serves as the dining room, where you can enjoy wonderful Créole meals. The bungalows, the largest of

Rooms in the main house are named for tropical flowers that bloom in the garden.

which can accommodate up to four guests, have individual terraces. Local art, exposed wood beams and wicker furnishings throughout the property add to the country-Caribbean decor.

CREOL' INN
Bel Air Des Rozieres, Tabanon
20 cottages
Continental breakfast
☎ 94-22-56; fax 94-19-28
In the US: ☎ 800-322-2223
Moderate/Expensive

L'Auberge de la Distillerie and Créol' Inn are owned by the same family.

Each of these hillside cottages near the rain forest sleeps four, so while the rates are in the expensive range for one couple, they are well within the moderate range when shared by a family or group of four. Built of wood and tin to look like the Caribbean homes of long ago, each small unit has ceiling fans as well as air-conditioning. All have a TV, telephone and cooking facilities. Guests can use the communal swimming pool, barbecue grills and hammocks.

LE MONT FLEURI
Vernou, Barbotteau
Five rooms
Breakfast included
☎ 94-23-92; fax 94-12-08
Inexpensive

At the east entrance to the national park, just off the Route de la Traversée, you will find this upscale gîte set in a large garden next to a swimming pool. Inside the comfortable three-star inn (owned by Accipe Tiburce and his wife) are five air-conditioned rooms with private baths. Guests are welcome to use the communal kitchen to prepare drinks and snacks.

Monsieur Tiburce also owns another inn in the same area called Les Alpinias. This large house has eight air-conditioned studios and apartments with small

kitchens, TVs and private balconies. They rent by the week at rates in the moderate range. (Same contact numbers.)

Trois-Rivières

LE JARDIN MALANGA
Hermitage, Trois-Rivières 97114
Nine rooms and cottages
Breakfast buffet
☎ 92-67-57; fax 92-67-58
E-mail malanga@leaderhotels.gp
www.malanga.gp
Expensive

You can see the islands of Les Saintes from the cliffside pool at this secluded colonial-style inn built in 1927 on a six-acre banana plantation. In the main house, a luxury suite has two bedrooms with a shared white-tile bath on the top floor. There are two rooms with private baths on the ground floor. Three cottages in the flower-filled garden each have two bedrooms and a loft suitable for a child.

All rooms are air-conditioned and have king-size beds and private balconies. The former kitchen in the main house is now **Le Panga** restaurant, which serves Créole meals beginning at seven each morning. Drinks are available until 10 o'clock each evening from the poolside bar.

LE GRANDE-ANSE HOTEL
Route Vieux Fort, Beach Road, Trois-Rivières 97114
16 bungalows
Breakfast included
☎ 92-90-47; fax 92-93-69
Inexpensive

You can walk to the black-sand beach from these small bungalows grouped around a pool and restau-

rant on a hillside west of Trois-Rivières. The lobby lacks any real charm, but the rooms are clean and comfortable. Each is air-conditioned and has a small kitchenette and balcony.

Location is one of the most appealing features of this Relais Créole, which is popular with French visitors. The national park and La Soufrière are within easy driving distance, and the ferries to Les Saintes leave from the nearby dock.

Saint-Claude

HOTEL SAINT GEORGES
Rue Gratien Parize
38 rooms and two suites
☎ 80-10-10; fax 80-30-50
Moderate

In the classy suburban foothills above the capital city of Basse-Terre, this contemporary hotel offers business travelers and vacationers pleasant accommodations in a convenient location. The spacious air-conditioned rooms decorated in crisp island colors have oversized bathrooms, private balconies, TVs and direct-dial phones. You can enjoy a swim in the lovely free-form pool, play a game of squash, or work out in the fitness center. The sunny **Le Lamasure Restaurant** serves gourmet international cuisine, and light meals are available at the popular bar, **Le Mahogany**. Director Pourqué Joachim and his staff speak several languages, including English, and are available to help you plan trips and activities during your stay.

BOUILLANTE
Le Domaine de Petite Anse
Plage de Petite Anse/Monchy
135 rooms and 40 bungalows
Continental breakfast
☎ 98-78-78; fax 98-80-28
In the US: ☎ 800-322-2223
Moderate

If you're a diver, this place might be just the ticket, as it offers a dive shop and is located right on the beach. Be aware that most of the Bouillante's guests are French, and the staff speaks little English.

Since there are no hotels nearby, the sandy beach at Bouillante is usually uncrowded.

This pretty red-roofed complex is an excellent base of operations for adventurers who plan to dive at the marine reserve off Pigeon Island or hike in the national park. Petite Anse is a secluded cove at the bottom of lush mountains.

Accommodations are simple but air-conditioned and comfortably furnished. The bungalows have kitchenettes and patios, while the hotel rooms have small refrigerators and private balconies.

LE DOMAINE DE MALENDURE
Morne Tarare Pigeon, Highway N2, Bouillante 97132
50 suites
Full breakfast
☎ 98-92-12; fax 98-92-10
In the US: ☎ 800-800-322-2223
E-mail malendure@leaderhotels.gp
Moderate

The split-level duplexes of this contemporary complex spill down beautifully landscaped hills on the edge of the national park overlooking the Cousteau Marine Reserve. There are 44 spacious suites in 22 bi-level pavilions. All feature living areas with sofa-beds and a sleeping loft with either one king-size or two double-size beds. In addition, there are six single-level studio

The poolside bar at Le Domaine is a popular spot for sipping rum cocktails while watching the sun set.

apartments. Each sunny air-conditioned unit is equipped with a refrigerator, TV and bathroom with a shower and separate toilet.

An on-site sports center arranges for scuba diving, deep-sea fishing, kayaking, hiking in the rain forest and jeep tours of the island. A Caribbean-style restaurant serves international specialties on a covered patio overlooking the sea.

Deshaies

FORT ROYAL TOURING CLUB
Pointe du Petit Bas-Vent, Deshaies 97126
107 rooms, two suites, 78 cottages
Continental breakfast
☎ 25-50-00; fax 25-50-01
Moderate

Parents will get some time alone while their kids (age four to 10) are entertained at Fort Royal's Club Ti Moun.

Once owned by Club Med, this modern hotel sprawls over several acres between two beautiful beaches at the base of the tropical forest. A three-story building houses nicely furnished air-conditioned rooms, while individual bungalows are scattered throughout the gardens and along the sandy beach. Every room has a TV, but you'll probably spend most of your time on the balcony watching the ocean.

The on-site restaurant serves Créole meals throughout the day, and island music is featured in the bar each evening. There's a gym, large swimming pool, tennis courts and watersports equipment. In addition, the hotel staff organizes diving excursions, island tours and fishing expeditions.

RESIDENCE POINTE BATTERIE
Point Batterie, Deshaies 97126
24 villas
☎ 28-57-03; fax 28-57-28
Expensive

Newly constructed villas surround the lobby and pool on this steep hillside where a fort once defended the island. (A few cannons are still on the grounds.) Each large villa will accommodate two to six people, and the largest units feature private swimming pools.

> **WARNING**
>
> While facilities are available for guests with disabilities, there's a lot of uphill hiking involved in getting around the resort, and this should be considered by anyone who has mobility restrictions.

All the villas are air-conditioned and have a kitchenette and TV. Les Canons de la Baie, the hotel's multilevel restaurant located directly on the water, is known for its excellent Créole cuisine.

LE RAYON VERT
La Coque Ferry, Pointe-Ferry 97126
22 rooms and bungalows
☎ 28-43-23; fax 28-46-27
Expensive

The swimming pool at this West Indian-style hotel just south of Deshaies seems to merge into the warm Caribbean waters of Ferry Bay – the perfect place to watch for the *rayon vert* (green flash), a good luck symbol that sometimes occurs as the sun slips below the horizon. This incredibly romantic little hotel is surrounded by lush plants and filled with colorful fur-

nishings. All the air-conditioned rooms and bungalows have a VCR and TV, but the view of the sea is the focal point. In the sunny restaurant, the chef creates imaginative meals using ingredients fresh from the market and matched with fine wines.

LA FLUTE ENCHANTEE (The Magic Flute)
Route de Caféière, Ziotte, Deshaies 97126
6 double villas, 2 rooms, 1 3-room apartment
Breakfast buffet
☎ 28-41-71; fax 28-54-43
E-mail flutench@wanadoo.fr
Expensive

Over 2,000 different species of trees and flowers grow on the grounds at the Magic Flute, providing shelter for a variety of colorful birds.

The Magic Flute has been popular with Europeans for several years and is gaining favor with Americans who are captivated by its charisma. Six duplex villas are almost hidden in the dense tropical garden near Grande Anse Beach. The main house has two additional guest rooms plus a three-room, two-bath apartment. Each of the spacious two-level villas is air-conditioned and has a large shaded patio, a living area, a small kitchen and a sleeping loft with two beds. One of the two swimming pools is equipped with hydro-massage and steam equipment, and an adjacent guest-only restaurant and bar serves meals, snacks and drinks.

Sainte-Rose

HOTEL DE LA SUCRERIE
Compté de Lohéac, Sainte-Rose 97115
526 bungalows
Breakfast included
☎ 28-60-17; fax 28-65-63
Inexpensive

One of the attractions of this splendid inn, located about a mile north of town, is the setting. The restored stone building that now houses the hotel's offices was the site of a 19th-century sugar mill. Today, intriguing reminders of the mill's existence are scattered

about a lovely tropical garden dominated by charming little guest cottages. The modern air-conditioned bungalows are constructed to resemble turn-of-the-century island houses, and each will accommodate up to four people. International and Créole cuisine is served in the hotel's beautiful restaurant built with exotic woods and local stone. The Musée du Rhum is nearby, and a lovely beach is within walking distance.

Camping

Camping Traversée is a campground south of Pointe-Noire on the west coast of Basse-Terre, ☎ 98-21-23. Campers sometimes set up near Sainte-Anne and Deshaies, and tents are usually allowed on public land with a permit (available from the town's mayor). During local school vacations, some beaches allow overnight camping, but check with the mayor's office to be sure.

Fully equipped sleeper vans can be rented from **Alligator Vacances** in Le Moule, ☎ 23-17-52, **Locap'Soleil** in Gosier, ☎ 84-56-51, and **Camping Cars Vert Bleu** in Deshaies, ☎ 28-51-25.

Best Places to Eat

The selection and preparation of food on Guadeloupe is marvelous. Fresh seafood and island-grown fruits and vegetables are served with traditional French sauces, zippy Créole spices, or a deliciously original combination of the two. It's not at all unusual to have a mix-and-match meal that begins with the island favorites such as ti punch (made with local rum) and accras (spicy fritters), followed by a gourmet dish created by a chef trained in Paris.

If a comparison must be made between the cuisines of Guadeloupe and Martinique, a general observation is that Guadeloupe does Créole better and Martinique wins the prize for French fare. This is highly debatable, so sample, indulge, and decide for yourself.

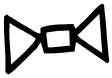
Check the list of French and Créole menu items on page 25 for descriptions of the most popular island dishes.

Guadeloupeans eat well and a bottle of fine French wine often complements lunch and dinner. As in France, it's not necessary to go to a large, elegant restaurant for an excellent meal. Small cafés all over the island serve wonderful meals prepared with the freshest market ingredients or delivered by local fishermen and farmers. In addition, a number of restaurants serve India-inspired recipes that were brought over by plantation workers, and American-style establishments cater to the pizza-'n-burger crowd.

The Language Barrier

A French phrasebook will come in handy, though many restaurants print their menus in English, and most have English speakers on staff. Menus, of course, are notorious for failing to call food by its common name in any language, preferring to concoct a fancy-sounding appellation to tweak your imagination as well as your appetite. So, accept the tweak with good humor. Almost everything is scrumptious, except for the bébélé, a dish of boiled tripe (stomach lining) and green bananas. Stay away from that!

Dress



Resort casual is about as dressed up as Guadeloupeans get. If you're going to a really elegant restaurant, ask about the proper attire

when you make reservations. Otherwise, clean shorts (not cutoffs), shirts (not midriff tank tops) and sandals are acceptable most everywhere. Even the fast-food places frown on swimsuits and bare feet.

You'll rarely be out of place with long pants and sport shirts for the men, and sundress or slacks for the women.

Pricing

Below are a few stand-outs among an abundant choice of dining options on Grande-Terre. We've also included tips on where to find "restaurant row," if there's one in the area.

Most eateries accept major credit cards; Prices usually are in euros.

TIP

The best way to find a good meal is to follow the locals, and be aware that your hotel staff may not be the most unbiased resource.

Use the following scale as a guide. Cost is per person, excluding drinks and taxes. Lunch prices and prix fixe meals frequently are less costly.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Very Expensive	More than $40/46€
Expensive	$30-$40/35€-46€
Moderate	$20-$30/23€-35€
Inexpensive	$10-$20/11€-23€
Bargain	Less than $10/11€

La Fête des Cuisinières

Connoisseurs of such things claim this event outshines carnival. Don't miss it.

The Festival of Cooks is Guadeloupe's most dazzlingly delicious annual event. Female chefs from all the French West Indies gather in Pointe-à-Pitre each August to praise Saint Laurent, patron saint of cooks, and celebrate the revered art of cooking. Everyone's invited, and if you schedule your vacation right, you can join the Caribbean's finest feeding frenzy.

This flashy feast day starts with an early morning mass at the 19th-century Cathedral of St. Pierre and St. Paul. After a solemn service where the food is blessed, traditionally dressed cooks carry baskets of food through the streets, dancing and swaying to the cheers of spectators. When they reach the Ecole Amedee Fengarol, it's party time. Music plays as the 200 chefs and their entourage enter the school yard to launch a five-hour banquet.

This tradition started in France during the Middle Ages and began on Guadeloupe in 1916. Some of the *cuisinières* are almost as old as the fête itself, and they seem to be the ones enjoying it most. With their white embroidered aprons over long, billowing skirts and their bright madras headdresses, the cooks sing of their love of cooking and the hardships they must bear to indulge their passion.

Then the feasting and rum gulping begins in earnest. After lunch, when the sun begins to drop, the *bal des cuisinières* (cook's ball) begins. There's dancing, music and singing – beguines, mazurkas, gro-ka, and old African songs with euphoric rhythms.

For exact dates, contact the Guadeloupe Tourist Office in Pointe-à-Pitre, ☎ 82-09-30; in the US, ☎ 410-236-8310, fax 212-838-7855.

Tipping

Leave nothing if the service is poor.

As in France, restaurant bills include the tip – note the words *service est compris* on the menu. However, your waiter probably will not receive all of this. It's customary to leave a few coins on the table exclusively for the person who serves you. There's no set guideline, but it seems reasonable to leave one euro at an inexpensive bistro and about 5% of the total bill at a fine restaurant.

Grande-Terre

Pointe-à-Pitre

LE JARDIN DES CARAIBES
Centre Saint-John (across from La Darse)
☎ 91-95-04
French/Créole
Noon-2pm and 7-11pm
Wednesday-Monday, closed Tuesday
Inexpensive

An open-air terrace faces the water in this casual restaurant right in the thick of harbor activity. Lydia, the owner/manager, sees that each guest is welcomed and served with warm hospitality. At lunch, try one of the salads or grilled fish. In the evening, several specialties deserve consideration. *Lambi* (conch) or *langouste* (lobster) get good reviews, and the chocolate flan is becoming famous.

TIP

Several sandwich and pastry shops are located in the courtyard and complex of the Centre Saint-John. A terrace restaurant inside the hotel serves an inexpensive lunch special every weekday.

DELIFRANCE
8 Place de la Victoire
☎ 83-83-89
Light meals
6:30am-7pm Monday-Friday; 6:30am-2pm Saturday
Bargain

The sign outside this sidewalk café down the street from the Office of Tourism says, "We're Nice Here; We Speak English." They are, and they do. In addition, they serve up a terrific breakfast of coffee, rolls and juice for about $5. At lunch and dinner, the choices run to quiches and sandwiches for a bit more, but they're still in bargain range. You order at the counter and carry your meal out on a tray. The place is popular with office workers, so try to arrive before or after the lunch hours. Credit cards and travelers' checks accepted.

TIP

The Place de la Victoire is surrounded by restaurants and cafés serving inexpensive Créole meals, most with patios that look out to the square. To try: **Le Marie-Galante**, 12 Place de la Victoire, ☎ 83-87-83, or **Le Normandie**, 14 Place de la Victoire, ☎ 82-37-15.

LA FOUGERE
34 Bis rue Peynier
☎ 89-01-05 or 89-03-66
French/Créole
Noon-3pm Monday-Friday
Moderate

Near the Musée Schoelcher, La Fougère (The Fern) is a pleasant setting for a full, set-price lunch.

Everything is well prepared and includes an appetizer and dessert. The rum selection is extensive, and service matches the fine setting.

Recent specials at La Fougère include chicken in a mildly-spiced lemon sauce & steamed crab served with a zippy Créole salsa.

The Story of Accras

Once upon a time, a rich Guadeloupean plantation owner employed a lady from the Normandie region of France. She was a marvelous cook, but despaired when she was unable to buy apples at the market for her famous apple fritters. An African woman, who was also employed as a cook on the plantation, suggested the French lady substitute bits of fish left from dinner preparations for the apples.

Once the fish fritters were cooked, the French woman found them too fishy and the African woman found them too bland. As luck would have it, a young woman from India happened to be chopping shallots and peppers for one of her recipes. The inventive women added the Indian ingredients to the African substitute in the French recipe and, v*oilà,* one of the most popular dishes of the West Indies was born.

Today, you can find all types of accras on Caribbean menus, from vegetable or fruit to meat or seafood. Try them all!

LE BIG
2 rue Delgrès
☎ 82-12-44
Steaks
Noon-3pm Monday-Friday
Inexpensive

The cages you see on the beaches in this area are casiers, and are used to catch the fish you find on menus all over the island.

If you want beef, this air-conditioned steak house across from quai Lardenoy (a couple of blocks inland from Centre Saint-John Perse) is a good choice. While it's lacking in island ambiance, the location is convenient, the service attentive, and the food dependably good. In addition to T-bones and such, the menu includes fish, salads and remarkable desserts.

TIP

Pick up picnic supplies at the **Match** supermarket down Rue de Provence from the Tourist Office, near the intersection of Rue de Nozières.

MAHARAJAH MONTY
47 rue Achille René Boisneuf
☎ 83-12-60; fax 90-14-95
Indian
Moderate

Chef Prem Kumar cooks specialties from India at this restaurant down the street from Musée Saint-John-Perse. Thousands of East Indians came to Guadeloupe as laborers after the abolition of slavery, and their influence on the island is still strong today. Try the tandoori chicken with an extra order of naan, the traditional flatbread.

ISAAC STREET CHEZ MAGGY
5 rue Alexandre-Isaac
☎ 83-34-00; fax 82-01-58
Island specialties
Noon-3pm, Monday-Friday
Inexpensive

At Isaac Street try the fritters and a fresh-fruit drink for a quick lunch.

Near the flower market and the cathedral of Saint-Pierre and Saint-Paul, this casual café located in a colorful colonial-style house serves take-out snacks and eat-in meals.

PARAD'ICE CAFE
La Darse Marina
☎ 90-96-76; fax 26-64-95
North American snacks
10am-11:30pm daily
Bargain

Cafés, bakeries, snack bars and restaurants cluster around the marina and along Avenue Général de Gaulle.

A little piece of the US exists right on the dock of the marina in Pointe-à-Pitre. You can get an ice cream cone and pizza to go or to eat at the outdoor tables facing the boats.

Bas-du-Fort Marina & Gosier

L'ALBATROS
Route du Bas-du-Fort (at the foot of the fort)
☎ 90-84-16
French
Noon-2pm and 7-10pm
Closed Sunday and Monday at lunch.
Moderate

Owners Alain and Chantal Hillenmeyer have years of experience as fine restaurateurs in France, and Alain has trained with some of the top chefs on the continent. Their beachside restaurant near the Fleur d'Epée and Marissol hotels has a lovely terrace that

overlooks the bay. If you opt to eat inside the air-conditioned dining room, ask for a table near the big bay window. On a clear day, you may be able to see the islands of Les Saintes or La Soufrière on Basse-Terre.

Start with hot or cold appetizers such as lobster salad or boiled foie gras in garlic cream. Then move on to the main course, which includes a wide choice of hot and cold plates served with freshly baked bread. (Try the beef fillet with wild mushrooms or stuffed salmon.)

You must save time and appetite for dessert. The list includes: melting chocolate cake, roasted pear with licorice ice cream, cold crême caramel with vanilla sorbets and fresh fruit.... Perhaps you will want to order dessert first?

LE PLANTEUR
Route du Bas-du-Fort
☎ 90-88-74
French/Créole
7pm-10:15pm
Closed Sunday
Moderate

You'll feel as though you've walked into a garden when you enter the terrace of this restaurant. This authentic Créole house has two open-air terraces, both lush with hanging ferns and potted plants. The friendly staff presents a menu filled with dishes inspired by traditional French and Créole recipes.

Specialties include *lambi* (conch) stuffed with spicy morsels and covered with a rich sauce, and shark fillets drizzled with hazelnut butter. End the meal with a light dessert and the special Planteur coffee.

LE SQUALE
55 Résidence Majestic, Bas-du-Fort
☎ 90-70-91
Pizza/Créole
11:30am-2pm and 6:30-11pm
Closed Sunday
Inexpensive/Moderate

Choose from the budget menu or the *carte gastronomique* at this casual indoor-outdoor eatery near the main hotels of Bas-du-Fort. If you go the economy route, the choices are pizza, pasta and chicken. On the upscale menu you'll find grilled lobster, red snapper covered in creamy chives and butter, and chef's specials laced with garlicky French sauces. Either way, the food is freshly prepared with a careful touch that's lacking at many informal restaurants.

Try the scampi with Parisian-style vegetables at Côté Jardin.

COTE JARDIN
Route du Bas-du-Fort
☎ 90-91-28
French
11:30am-2pm and 7-10:30pm
Closed Sunday and open only for dinner on Saturday
Expensive

Fine French cuisine is prepared in plain view as guests relax in wicker chairs set at tables laid with white linen. Fresh local produce and fish star on the menu, which also features lobster, foie gras, steak and duck.

LA GRANDE PIZZERIA
Route du Bas-du-Fort
☎ 90-82-64
Pizza/Italian
7pm-midnight
Closed Sunday
Inexpensive/Moderate

More than pizza is available at this popular Italian place. All of the pasta dishes are delicious, the risotto

is outstanding, and the pizza is superb. The only thing better than the food is the casual setting. Diners sit at plastic tables on a colorfully decorated garden terrace overlooking the Caribbean.

TIP

Be aware that most restaurants close for several weeks each year. Usually, the closings are scheduled between late June and late September. Call to confirm that a restaurant is open before you drive out of your way for a special meal.

AUBERGE DE LA VIEILLE TOUR
Route de Montauban/Gosier
☎ 84-23-23
Eclectic/Créole
Noon-2:30pm and 7-10pm
Very expensive

Built around the base of an 18th-century mill, the main restaurant in this newly remodeled four-star hotel is quite elegant. Huge windows provide a panoramic view of the sea, tall potted palms add a tropical touch, and eye-level lamps cast warm, subdued light on crystal and china. This is a lovely restaurant with historic ties. While the cuisine is considered nouvelle, traditional Créole is featured on Thursday nights, when even the entertainment "goes island." At other times, a talented kitchen staff prepares a variety of dishes such as marinated beef, lamb in citrus-spiked honey, lobster in butter sauce, fish spiced with ginger, and breast of duck in pineapple sauce. Imaginative desserts include pastry-wrapped bananas and cinnamon-spiked chocolate mousse. An extensive wine list is offered. Live entertainment is provided most evenings, and the hotel's piano bar is open nightly from

six until nine. Try one of the dark, aged rums that are made for after-dinner sipping.

Another hotel restaurant to try: **Le Zawag** at Le Créole Beach Hotel, ☎ 90-46-73, on the beach at Pointe de la Verdure east of town. Prices are in the moderate range and specialties include lobster and grilled fish.

LE BANANIER
Montauban, Route du Bas-du-Fort
☎ 84-34-85
Créole
12:30pm-2:30pm and 7:30 to 10:30pm
Closed Monday
Expensive

Popular chef Jean Clarus has settled down at Le Bananier with an experienced staff directed by Cornélia, the former manager of Auberge de la Vieille Tour. Together, the team delivers a polished and adventurous dining experience. The atmosphere is pleasant. It's almost like being in a fine Caribbean home, with dusty-rose table linens, lush potted plants and wooden beams across a raised ceiling. Chef Clarus calls his cooking style nouvelle cuisine Créole, which means he gets creative with traditional recipes. The results are fabulous. Service is reliably smooth, and the wine list is better than average.

CHEZ VIOLETTA
East of Gosier off D119 in Perinette
☎ 84-10-34
Créole
11:30am-2:30pm and 7-10pm
Moderate

This place was made famous by the late Violetta Chaville when she was grande dame of Guadeloupe's *cuisinières* (female chefs). While there are other Créole restaurants that serve meals as delicious, Chez Violetta is remarkable for its history and reputation. Give it a try.

Sainte-Anne

TIP

You can pick up a quick lunch at one of the many snack vans on the beach in Sainte-Anne, or cross Route de la Plage and eat inside or outdoors at one of the casual bargain cafés.

If you don't want to hassle with the crowd at Côte d'Azur, call your order in and pick it up at the take-out window.

COTE D'AZUR
Châteabrun, N4, east of Sainte-Anne
☎ 88-38-01
Pizza/Italian
12pm-2pm and 6-10pm
Closed Monday and at lunch on Sunday
Inexpensive

The wood-fire oven at this popular restaurant south of town turns out wonderful pizzas, so families with hungry kids take up most of the tables on the wrap-around porch in the evenings.

Other items on the menu include lasagna, spaghetti, salads, and a few meat selections – typical Italian fare. For dessert, the profiteroles are highly recommended.

CHEZ ELLES
Les Galbas, N4, west of Sainte-Anne
☎ 88-92-36
Grill
7pm until the coals get cold
Closed Monday and Tuesday
Reservations recommended
Moderate

Specialties at Chez Elles include grilled salmon, red snapper and steak entrées, and chocolate cake for dessert.

Look for this small, secluded restaurant on the right just before you come into Sainte-Anne from the west. You can sit outdoors on the garden patio or inside the

casual dining room. Either way, you order from a menu board set up beside the outdoor wood-fired grill.

Since the restaurant is popular with locals and tourists, make a reservation unless you plan to arrive when the doors open at seven.

> **TIP**
>
> On the beach road, try **Le Barmuda**, ☎ 85-32-38, or **Le Coquillage**, ☎ 88-00-81, for an inexpensive lunch. Service is friendly, and the food is good.

LA TOUBANA
Durivage
☎ 88-25-78
Créole
11:30am-10pm
Dinner reservations recommended
Expensive

A steel band plays at La Toubana on Thursdays.

This hotel restaurant has one of the most spectacular locations on Grande-Terre. From a high cliff top, the restaurant looks out on a large swimming pool that seems to meld with the Caribbean. Arrive early to watch the ocean as the sun sets and to secure a good table. The food is as excellent as the scenery. You can't go wrong ordering grilled lobster. The restaurant can be crowded, so be sure to make a reservation.

L'ACCRA
Durivage
☎ 88-22-40
Créole
Noon-2pm and 7-10pm
Closed Sunday during low tourist season
Inexpensive/Moderate

L'Accra is a family-run restaurant on a hill not far from Caravelle Beach in the Motel de Sainte-Anne.

The English-speaking staff at L'Accra is friendly and patient when answering your queries about the menu.

Madame Séjor oversees the preparation of excellent cuisine that's served on a covered garden terrace. *Caresses des Antilles* (fresh fruit drinks) are a good way to start a meal, which may include stuffed crab, shrimp puffs, goat stew, or chicken brochettes. Finish with a cup of island coffee and a homemade dessert.

LES OISEAUX
Anse des Rochers, off N4 east of town
☎ 88-56-92
French/Créole
Noon-2:30pm and 7-10:30pm
Closed Monday and for lunch Sunday-Wednesday
Moderate/Expensive

Be sure to end an evening at Les Oiseaux with one of their famous digestifs.

Claudette and Arthur Rollé own this garden cottage on a hillside overlooking the coast between Sainte-Anne and Saint-François. Madame Rollé uses Caribbean recipes handed down by her grandmother, adapting them to suit her mood and the available ingredients. The results are wonderful.

The restaurant has a breezy open-air terrace attached to a two-story stone structure that houses a first-floor pub. You'll order from a large stand-up menu printed on a strip of leather, and choices include mostly steak and seafood. There's a limited, but adequate, wine list.

Saint-François

LA LOUISIANE
Les Hauts de Saint-François
☎ 88-44-34
Créole
Noon-2pm and 7-10:30pm
Reservations recommended
Expensive

Véronique and Didier are new owners of this out-of-the-way restaurant located in a colonial-style house on the way to La Plantation Sainte-Marthe, about two

miles from town. They are vivacious hosts who make you glad you came. Try one of the fresh fish dishes served with a creative sauce made from island fruit and spices. Afterwards, pick one of the amazing ice cream concoctions.

TIP

Head for the marina if you're looking for a casual café with inexpensive meals. For something a little nicer, try **La Chaloupe** (the rowboat). It's in the shopping center next to the casino. Not directly on the water, but the seafood is good.

LA VALLEE D'OR
La Plantation Sainte-Marthe
Les Hauts de Saint-François
☎ 93-11-11
French/Créole
7am-11pm
Dinner reservations a must
Very Expensive

Since the location is a bit remote, your dining companions will probably be guests of this chic resort. There's rarely a crowd, so you can linger over the menu that's heavy on French favorites such as entrecôte and bouillabaisse. The service is as excellent as the food, and the wine list is comprehensive.

KOTESIT
Rue de la République
☎ 88-40-84
French/Créole
Noon-2:15pm and 7-10pm
Dinner reservations recommended
Moderate

Sample menu: grilled fish or lobster, chicken brochette, tender beef filets, poultry baked in pastry, fish with a rich French sauce.

You sit right at the water's edge to enjoy lunch or dinner on one of the three covered terraces at Kotésit. A striped awning provides shade and ocean breezes keep you cool. The chef takes pride in changing the menu often to provide variety for regular customers and to take advantage of the best provisions from both the sea and the markets. The desserts are imaginative and delicious.

LA VARANGUE
La Cocoteraie Hotel, Avenue de l'Europe
☎ 88-79-81
International
7-10:30pm
Reservations essential
Expensive

Like the hotel, La Varangue is the best on the island. The menu leans toward French dishes with a Caribbean twist. Fresh island products are used along with imported meats to create sumptuous main courses such as coconut chicken and veal in pineapple sauce. Sauced vegetables, roasted potatoes and crispy salads round out the meals. The dining room is an airy, covered terrace.

Musicians perform in the evenings in this relaxed but elegant atmosphere.

IGUANE CAFE
Route de la Pointe des Châteaux
☎ 88-61-37
Caribbean/Créole
7:30pm-11pm
Open Sundays for lunch and dinner; closed Tuesday
Expensive

The Iguane is best described as charming, but you wouldn't be wrong to call it cute. Purple tablecloths and colorful walls lend a touch of whimsy. A large selection of flavor-infused rums at the bar adds a bit of

adventure. In all, this little café is simply a great place to enjoy a good dinner.

Chef Sylvain moves expertly around his open-air kitchen preparing imaginative creations such as batter-fried goat cheese and chicken in caramelized coconut milk. He uses spices liberally to turn out sumptuous stews and rich au gratins in addition to grilled meats and steamed fish. The dessert menu includes irresistible warm chocolate cake with crispy nuts and a creamy sauce.

TIP

If you're in Pointe des Châteaux, have lunch at **La Paillotte**, in the parking area below the cross. It offers good sandwiches, fish and Créole chicken. Buy dessert from one of the roadside vendors selling homemade ice cream.

Le Moule

CHEZ DOU-DOU
Le Moule, Highway N5
☎ 23-53-63
Créole
Noon-2:30pm and 7-10pm
Moderate

Doudou means sweetheart, an appropriate name for this comfy little Créole house with its sweeping verandah directly across the road from the beach outside Le Moule. The menu features typical island fare carefully prepared with fresh ingredients. Salads are especially good and, of course, there's grilled fish.

Try to eat here on a weekend evening when there's live entertainment and dancing.

COEUR CREOLE
32 rue Victor Hugo
☎ 23-59-06
French/Créole
Noon-3pm and 7 to 11pm
Closed Sunday
Moderate/Expensive

FYI: The word "cocktail" often refers to a mixture of fruit juices, which may or may not contain alcohol.

Right in the center of town, this casually-chic restaurant specializes in well-prepared seafood dishes. Try fresh fish in a French-style sauce laced with island spices or a stew made of sea urchins, followed by a warm dessert crêpe.

Campêche

CHATEAU DE FEUILLES
Campêche, off D120
☎ 22-30-30
Nouvelle
11am-2pm
Closed Monday
Reservations essential
Expensive

People travel from all over the island to have lunch at this farm owned by Martine and Jean-Pierre Dubost. The Dubosts invite you to arrive about 11 o'clock to allow time for a swim or a stroll in the garden before lunch is served at noon. Prices are high, but the meals are outstanding and worth every franc.

All the cooking is done in a covered outdoor kitchen, and the results stand up to meals at any gourmet restaurant. As a starter, you can choose from a large selection of fruit punch cocktails. The menu changes, but a typical lunch may include some type of pâté followed by a main course of lamb tenderloin, Créole sausage, or breast of duck. You'll finish with a homemade dessert – perhaps a fruit tart or flan.

Find this out-of-the-way restaurant by going north out of Le Moule on D123 until it becomes D120. At an intersection near a historic sugar mill, you will see a sign for the restaurant. Turn left at the sign and watch for Château de Feuilles on the left.

Basse-Terre

Chutes du Carbet

LE SOUVENIR
On the road to the second waterfall, L'Habituée
☎ 86-74-75
Créole
Noon-10pm
Closed Tuesday
Moderate/Expensive

House specials: lobster stew, chicken in a mango sauce and fish flavored with saffron.

Of the many small eateries along the route to Carbet Falls, this colorful café is one of the best. Owned by a Belgian and his Guadeloupean wife who claim that everything on the menu is a specialty.

Fixed-price meals are a good value, especially at lunchtime. Be sure to have the excellent crêpes for dessert.

Saint-Claude

LE TAMARINIER
Place de la Mairie
☎ 80-06-67
Créole
12:30pm-11pm
Closed Wednesday and Sunday evenings
Moderate

The Delumeau family offers tasty simple meals at good prices in their casual restaurant on Saint

The curry and Créole ratatouille are two of the most popular selections at Le Tamarinier, and the red snapper is always delicious.

Claude's main street. The menu changes to take advantage of fresh items bought at the market each morning, and there are usually three or four main dishes from which to choose.

Everything is served with vegetables; beer and wine are available. The restaurant has many regular customers, who linger over dinner late in the evenings.

LE LAMASURE
Hotel Saint Georges, rue Gratien
☎ 80-10-10
International
Noon-2pm and 7:30 to 9pm
Closed Sunday for lunch
Expensive

Le Lamasure is an elegant restaurant at the three-star Hotel Saint Georges in the classy town of Saint Claude, and one of the best places to eat on Guadeloupe. The Regional Consular Institute for the Formation of Restaurant Careers is based here, so service and food preparation are under constant scrutiny. Steaks and seafood top the list of gourmet specialties, and each meal is artfully presented by an attentive waiter. On Friday evenings, guests enjoy live piano music.

Bouillante

LE ROCHER DE MALENDURE
Bouillante, Morne Tarare Pigeon, Highway N2
☎ 98-70-84
French/Créole
Noon-2pm and 7-10pm
Closed Sunday evenings
Reservations recommended
Moderate

Pigeon Island can be seen across the water from this pretty split-level restaurant built on a cliff above

Malendure Beach. The view alone is worth a visit, but the food is good, too. Fishing is the favorite pastime of owner Franck Lesueur, and the menu reflects this.

Grilled marlin and marinated red snapper and are favorites at Le Rocher. In addition, the accras and barbecued chicken are excellent.

LE RANCH
La Lise, Pigeon
☎ 98-95-58
Pizza/Seafood
11:30am-2:30pm and 6 to 10:30pm
Closed Tuesday
Inexpensive

A large aquarium dominates one side of this casual restaurant where seafood, home-style cooking, barbecue ribs and pizza top the menu. The fixed-price lunch menu is in the bargain range and includes an appetizer, main course and dessert. At dinner, ask which dishes are prepared with right-out-of-the-water fresh fish. Desserts are homemade and delicious.

LA TOUNA
Anse Galet, on the beach
☎ 98-70-10
Seafood
Noon-3pm and 7-9:30pm
Closed Monday and Sunday evenings
Moderate

If you're a fisherman, this is the place for you. The local Marlin Club hangs out here, fishing trips depart from the adjacent pier, and deep-sea fishing videos are shown. Located on the beach at Anse Galet with a fabulous view of Pigeon Island. The specialty is grilled fish served with one of six sauces. Other meals include lobster (choose your own from the tank), smoked fish, and seafood court-bouillon. For dessert, try the lime tart or homemade ice cream.

Deshaies

LE KARACOLI
Le Grande-Anse, on the beach
☎ 28-41-17
Créole
11am-4:30pm
Moderate

Grande-Anse, north of Deshaies, is one of the most gorgeous beaches on Guadeloupe, and Le Karacoli (the seashell) is the best-known restaurant in the area – no doubt because of all the signs advertising its presence. Even without the signs, the restaurant's reputation has spread widely among divers and tourists who visit this far northwestern coast.

Drop by, even if it's only for a drink. The setting is wonderful and proprietor Lucienne Salcède will make your visit special. Tables on the terrace are shaded by palm trees; you can also dine inside. After lunch, enjoy a swim or take a nap on the beach.

Menu items include scallops, stuffed crab, colombo chicken (curry) and other traditional Caribbean dishes, all well prepared.

Pointe-Noire

CHEZ JACKYE
Anse Guyonneau, on the beach
☎ 98-06-98
Créole/African
Noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Closed Sunday evenings
Dinner reservations recommended
Inexpensive

Lobster is served three ways at this casual seaside café named for its owner, Jacqueline Cabrion. For a

lighter lunch, try one of the sandwiches, omelets or salads. Jackye also offers fixed-price meals which include large servings of her specialties, such as marinated goat, colombo conch and ragoût of lamb. You can't beat the bananas flambée for dessert.

LES GOMMIERS
Rue Baudot
☎ 98-01-79
Créole
11am-3pm and 7-10pm
Moderate

Set in an island-style house across the street from the local high school, this plant-filled restaurant serves light lunches and full dinners. Although the location is less than perfect, the dining area is nicely decorated and the talented owner-chef, Josette Besplan, runs an inspired kitchen. Fixed-price meals are an especially good value. At lunch try the French-inspired Niçoise salad or Caribbean accras. Flan and profiteroles are on the dessert menu.

Sample menu items include paella, seafood stew, colombos, and steaks.

Sainte-Rose

CHEZ CLARA
Sainte-Rose, on the waterfront
☎ 28-72-99
Créole
Noon-2:30pm and 6:30-11pm
Closed Wednesday and Sunday evenings
Moderate

Owner Clara Lesueur gave up her jazz-dance career in France to join the family restaurant business. Today, she's famous for serving outstanding Créole cuisine in the waterfront restaurant that carries her name. Tops on the menu are *lambi ragoût* and fresh

fish with a savory sauce. Guests may enjoy drinks at the octagonal bar before being served dinner on an outdoor deck outfitted with wicker tables and chairs. Clara herself often takes orders and visits with patrons; her English is excellent.

LA PERLE NOIRE
Morne Rouge, east of N2, south of Sainte-Rose
☎ 28-98-62
French/Créole
11am-3:30pm and 6-11pm
Moderate

You'll receive a warm welcome at the Black Pearl, which is located in the countryside southeast of town. The sunny restaurant features local river shrimp with cognac sauce, bouillabaisse, and crayfish porridge. If you prefer something lighter, ask about the spa menu.

Vieux-Fort

LE MAILLON
Vieux-Fort, off D6 near town hall and cathedral
☎ 92-02-25
Créole
Noon-3pm and 7:30-11pm
Moderate/Expensive

The fixed-price meal at Le Maillon is in the bargain range.

Sometimes the view is more important than anything else, and that's the case at this rustic little café with a sweeping view of the sea. The food is fine – quite good, in fact – but the panoramic vista is the highlight. Order the fish kebabs or grilled shrimp.

Trois-Rivières

BLUE CARAIB
Trois-Rivières, at the port in town
☎ 92-76-21
Pizza/Créole
Noon-3pm and 7-10pm
Inexpensive

This casual port-side café is popular with both tourists and locals. Try the pizza baked in a wood-fired oven, or order one of the traditional Créole meals. Everything is served on a pleasant patio near the boat dock, and there are pool tables inside. On Fridays, the place goes wild with karaoke singers, and piano-bar entertainment is featured on Saturdays.

The fixed-price meal at Blue Caraïb is an excellent bargain.

La Désirade

Overview

La Désirade is just over six miles from Pointe des Châteaux on the far southeastern tip of Grande-Terre. It is inhabited by about 1,600 people and rarely visited by tourists, which is perhaps its most appealing feature. Most visitors will not want to stay overnight, but La Désirade makes a wonderful day trip.

Sandy beaches and reef-protected bays lie along the southern shore, and a bicycle or motor scooter is all you need to get from one end of the island to the other.

There are a few places to eat, a few sites to see, and more than a few panoramic vistas to behold.

A Brief History

Native Caribs lived on the island long before Columbus stopped by in 1493, and a few continued to live there long after Europeans deemed the island uninhabitable. Columbus didn't think much of the eight-mile-long by one-mile-wide islet because it did not offer a source of fresh water. Later, plantation owners ignored La Désirade because the soil was poor and it received little rain.

When a few cases of leprosy were diagnosed on Guadeloupe in 1725, authorities finally found a purpose for the little island. All lepers – and their slaves – were banished to La Désirade, and the first official colonization began. Many years later, wealthy Guadeloupeans banished their undesirable relatives to the outer island. However, the "bad blood" population rose so quickly that government officials had to stop accepting them.

La Désirade was slowly populated by this ragged band of convalescents and outcasts, but life was so difficult that most of them left as quickly as they could find a way off the island. Over the years, development has been sluggish, but a desalination plant now supplies water for drinking and irrigation, and tourists have begun to discover the lovely beaches.

Getting to La Désirade

Arrival By Air

Air Caraïbes flies from Pointe-à-Pitre to the airfield on La Désirade's southwest coast twice each weekday and once on Saturday and Sunday. Marie-Galante Aviation flies to the same airfield from Saint-François three times a day. Both charge about 250FF/40€/$35 for the short round-trip flight.

AIRLINE INFORMATION	
Air Caraïbes	On Guadeloupe: ☎ 82-47-00; fax 82-47-48 On La Désirade: ☎ 20-05-12

Arrival By Sea

Two ferries run between Saint-François and La Désirade – ***Sotramade***, ☎ 88-58-06, and ***Socimade***, ☎ 83-32-67. The trip takes 45 minutes, but it's rough going, and medication to prevent motion sickness is highly recommended. While departures for both ferries are usually at 8am and 5pm, the schedule changes, so it's best to call in advance. Return trips from La Désirade are at 6:15am and 4pm. The round-trip fare is about 125FF/20€/$18.

Getting Around

Only one road stretches eight miles from one end of the island to the other, and there aren't many

cars, so biking is an ideal way to get around. If you prefer to go a bit faster, scooters are available. You can rent both at the ferry dock for about $9 per day for a bike and $20 per day for a scooter. (This is a passenger ferry only; no cars.)

BICYCLE & SCOOTER RENTAL INFORMATION	
Jo Scooters	☎ 20-00-02
Location 2000	☎ 20-03-74
Loca Sun	☎ 20-07-84

Exploring the Island

It doesn't take long to see everything La Désirade has to offer. The entire north side is too rugged and windblown for comfort, so all the towns and beaches are connected by a narrow road (D207), which runs along the southern shore. The airstrip is on the west end of the island, near the town of Grande-Anse, also called Beauséjour and Le Bourg. If you arrive by boat, you will dock at the pier in town.

Grande-Anse

Beginning at the ferry landing in Grande-Anse, follow the main road to **Place du Maire Mendiant**, the small town square. Notice the pretty yellow church next to the art-deco town hall. West of the square, the road leads to a marine cemetery with intriguing tombstones. To the east, the road passes **Plage à Fifi** and leads to an area known as **Le Désert Salines**.

That's about all there is in the largest town on La Désirade. The best feature of the island is inland, behind Grande-Anse.

Inland Trails

A trail called the **Coulée du Grand Nord** runs across the island's central plateau offering spectacular panoramic views. To reach the trail, take the narrow, rocky road known as the **Chemin de Croix** (Way of the Cross) that begins on the northeast side of Grande-Anse and climbs a steep hill topped by a small chapel (☆) dedicated to the Virgin Mary. The climb is tough, and can be done only on foot (or possibly by motor scooter). After you reach the chapel, the path levels out along the plateau.

It's possible to continue west along a dirt road called **Chemin du Latanier** all the way to **Les Galets**, a tiny village on the western curve of the island. Otherwise, retrace your steps to the chapel, where you can either return to town or follow another trail along the ridge of **Grand-Montagne**, the island's highest point, to Baie-Mahault, a small hamlet on the eastern end of the south coast.

The hike to Baie-Mahault along the trail that begins above Grande-Anse takes three hours, one way.

Coastal Treats

The most beautiful beaches on La Désirade are **Souffleur** (☆), midway along the southern coast, and **Petite Rivière** (☆), near Baie-Mahault. Both have fine white sand shaded by palm trees. The tiny town of **Souffleur** is nothing more than a handful of wooden houses at the base of some hills dotted with windmills. **Baie-Mahault**, however, is a lovely spot. The ruin of the old lepers' house is just east of the village, and a cemetery is nearby.

Farther east, the road splits and the path to the right will take you to a lighthouse and weather station at **Pointe Doublé** (☆). From here you will have a dramatic view of the Atlantic Ocean.

Adventures

Island tours are offered by **A.C.D.I.** in Saint-François, ☎ 81-71-76 or 55-30-30; fax 84-53-03. They offer full-day escorted tours from town, including boat transportation, minibus or 4x4 tour of La Désirade, and lunch.

Scuba trips are available from Tony Dinane of **Chez Tony** in Baie-Mahault, ☎ 20-02-93 or 20-06-60.

There's a **waterski** center in Baie-Mahault: **Centre AGSN**, ☎ 26-17-47.

Best Places to Stay

HOTEL DE L'OASIS DU DESERT
Désert Salines, Grande-Anse
Six rooms
☎ 20-02-12
Inexpensive

The "desert oasis" is a simple inn close to Grande-Anse Beach with a plain little restaurant serving adequate meals. A couple can stay here with breakfast for less than $50.

Both the Oasis and Mirage hotels have restaurants and are located on a quiet road within walking distance of town and the beach.

HOTEL LE MIRAGE
Désert Salines, Grande-Anse
7 rooms
☎ 20-01-08; fax 20-07-45
Inexpensive

Only a short distance from l'Oasis, the Mirage is set in a similarly plain building and offers accommodations at about the same price.

Gîtes

Several gîtes and rooms in private homes are also available to rent. Three to try:

Jean-Édouard Saint-Auret is near the pharmacy on Rue de la République in Grande-Anse. ☎ 20-03-11. It has four rooms.

Madame Saint-Auret Bertinat, with three rooms, is in the Désert Salines section of Grande-Anse. ☎ 20-07-41.

Madame Pioche, near Petite-Rivière beach in Baie-Mahault, ☎ 20-09-64, fax 20-09-91, runs **Les Gîtes de la Grande Source** – four bungalows with a swimming pool.

Best Places to Eat

Seafood restaurants and quick-meal cafés are found along the main road running through Grande-Anse and Baie-Mahault.

LA PAYOTTE
Plage à Fifi
☎ 20-01-29
Reservations requested for dinner
Bargain

This small wooden restaurant has a patio with a view of the sea. The menu features Créole foods, fruit drinks and ice cream.

CHEZ MARRAINE
Baie-Mahault
☎ 20-00-93
Closed Wednesday
Inexpensive

Try the *lambi* in wine or the chicken colombo served by the friendly staff at this pretty restaurant set in a shady garden.

Les Saintes

Overview

The eight exquisite islands known as Les Saintes lie seven miles south of Trois-Rivières on the south-

ern tip of Basse-Terre. Only the largest two, **Terre-de-Bas** and **Terre-de-Haut**, are inhabited. Most tourist attractions and facilities are on Terre-de-Haut.

Les Saintes are ideal day-trip destinations, and Terre-de-Haut has many places to stay overnight.

From a distance, the archipelago appears as steep green hills jutting from the blue sea. A closer look reveals lovely white-sand beaches and calm coves along the shore. In the main town of **Bourg des Saintes**, whitewashed, red-roofed houses spread out around the C-shaped harbor, where colorful sailboats and large yachts are docked. It is one of the most beautiful sights in the Caribbean.

Office of Tourism

Office du Tourisme
Rue de la Grande Anse
☎ 99-58-60; fax 99-58-48
8am-1pm and 2-5pm Monday-Friday
8am-1pm Saturday.

Stop by the office located just before the Mairie (town hall) for maps, island information, and a list of accommodations and restaurants.

A Brief History

Les Saintes were discovered, along with the rest of the Guadeloupean islands, in November 1493 during Columbus' second expedition. They were occupied at the time by Carib Indians, and the Europeans left them alone until 1648, when the French governor of Guadeloupe ordered occupation of the islands to protect them from British settlement. This, of course, led to years of rivalry between France and England.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Les Saintes were originally called Los Santos, and probably named after the Christian celebration of All Saints Day, which takes place on the first of November, near the time of Columbus' first visit.

About 3,000 people live on Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas, the only inhabited islands in Les Saintes archipelago.

In 1782, the Battle of the Saintes resulted in a British victory (ships commanded by the Count of Grasse were destroyed by a fleet commanded by Hood and Rodney), but the French won possession again in 1815 after the Treaty of Paris was signed. Two forts were built on the islands after France regained control: Fort Joséphine on Ilet-à-Cabrit, and Fort Napoléon on Terre-de-Haut. Since no attacks were made on the islands after 1815, the forts were used only as prisons during World War II.

Terre-de-Haut has poor soil, so the French who settled it became fishermen. The neighboring island of Terre-de-Bas, however, has better soil, and many slaves were brought in to cultivate the land as plantations developed. Thus, the population of Les Saintes' two main islands is quite dissimilar. Very few blacks live on Terre-de-Haut, while most of the residents of Terre-de-Bas are of African descent.

Getting to Les Saintes

Arrival By Air

Air Caraïbes flies from Pointe-à-Pitre to Le Bourg on Terre-de-Haut four times on weekdays

and twice on Sunday. The round-trip costs about 330FF/55€/$50.

AIRLINE INFORMATION	
Air Caraïbes	On Guadeloupe: ☎ 82-47-00; fax 82-47-48 On Terre-de-Haut: ☎ 99-51-23

Arrival By Sea

Ferry service is available to Terre-de-Haut from several towns on Guadeloupe and, during the tourist season, from the neighboring island of Marie-Galante. The trip can be quite rough, so anyone inclined to seasickness is advised to take preventive medication. The trip from Pointe-à-Pitre takes close to an hour, and the ride from Trois-Rivières lasts only 20 minutes. Call to confirm the schedule and costs. **L'Express des Iles** (☎ 83-12-45 in Pointe-à-Pitre; fax 91-11-05) and **Brudey Frères** (☎ 90-04-48) have daily trips from Pointe-à-Pitre year-round. Both companies add service from Saint-François during high season.

Terre-de-Haut Marina can be reached at ☎ 99- 56-50. If you speak French, they'll be able to help you with the ferry schedule.

A boat called ***Princesse Caroline*** (☎ 86-95-83) has daily service to and from Trois-Rivières. Expect the round-trip fare to be about 144FF/24€/$21 from Pointe-à-Pitre or Saint-François, and around 90FF/15€/$13 from Trois-Rivières.

A small boat called ***l'Inter*** travels between Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas Monday through Saturday – three times each morning, and twice each afternoon. On Sundays and holidays the schedule varies, and service is less frequent. Check at the dock for tickets and exact times. Expect the fare to be about 36FF/6€/$5.

Getting Around

Most area hotels will pick you up from the airport or ferry dock.

Only a few cars are registered on Terre-de-Haut, and the only vehicles available for rent are motor scooters and bicycles. A few minivan taxis give guided tours, but if you don't speak French, they probably aren't an option for you. Most people walk everywhere on the island, but motorbikes are an excellent alternative. Regular bicycles are less efficient because of the steep hills.

The little network of narrow roads has little traffic, so you can zip around the island on your scooter with little danger of being run down by a car. However, be aware that it's against the law to drive a motorbike in the main town from 9am to noon and between 2 and 4pm.

Several rental companies are located near the ferry dock and more are on the main road south of the pier. If you are on the island for the day, it's possible to rent a motor scooter for about 138FF/23€/$20. If you want to keep it overnight, expect to pay about 180FF/30€/$26 per 24-hour period. Since many of your fellow passengers will be renting a bike as soon as the ferry docks, plan to claim one as quickly as possible.

Azincourt, Philippe Moullage . . . . . ☎ 99-50-90
Localizé . . . . . ☎ 99-51-99
(Route Aérodrome)
Archipel . . . . . ☎ 99-52-63
Place Église
Dabriou, Marie-Edouard. . . . . ☎ 99-53-32

You'll be asked for a cash deposit (about 1,710FF/285€/$250) or major credit card when you take the scooter out. Gas is supplied, but insurance is not, so you will be liable for damages if you have an accident.

Exploring the Island

Terre-de-Haut is the largest and most beautiful of the islands in the archipelago of Les Saintes. If you have time, take a ferry to Terre-de-Bas, the only other inhabited island. Both are small enough to see during a day-trip from Guadeloupe, but consider staying overnight so that you can enjoy the tranquility after most of the tourists leave.

Le Bourg

The main town on Terre-de-Haut is Le Bourg, which sits in the curve of a large bay midway along the ragged northern coast. Charming homes, restaurants and shops line the narrow streets, which are full of colorful flowers and tropical plants. In the center of town you'll find a lovely church, town hall and public square, but the primary tourist attraction is **Fort Napoléon** (☆), east of town.

The fort is at the top of a steep hill overlooking the sea. You can visit every day from 9am to noon. The entrance fee is 20FF/3.33€/$2.90. Originally named Fort Louis, the bastion was built by the French to protect Guadeloupe from the English. It was completed in 1867, but was never needed because the British stopped fighting for control of the island after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1815. Nevertheless, the fort is interesting to explore, and the view of the harbor from its ramparts is extraordinary. Take time to see the two museums and look for iguanas in the botanical garden.

Hiking Trails

Le Chameau (☆), the camel, is the highest point on Terre-de-Haut (1,014 feet), and hikers will want to make the hour-long uphill trek to the top on foot. Others may opt to ride their motor scooter up the winding paved road, which takes less than 10 minutes. From the tower at the summit, you can see most of Terre-de-Haut as well as the other seven islands in the archipelago and Marie-Galante.

From the ferry dock, head southwest toward Bois-Joli. (This western part of the island is fairly untamed, but the views are excellent.) Follow signs to Le Chameau.

Le sentier des Crêtes (☆), the Crêtes circuit or trail, is an easy 40-minute hike through lovely countryside with fabulous views. It runs from Grand Souffleur past the Pompierre beach and Marigot Bay to Anse du Bourg in the Mouillage area north of the ferry dock. If you begin in town, you start off with a climb up a little hill on rue de la Grande-Anse, but there's a nice view from the top.

At Grande-Anse look for the footpath leading east along the cliffs to Plage Pont-Pierre, then on to Marigot. It is possible to pick up the road at Pont-Pierre and follow it past Marigot up to Fort Napoléon. From the fort, it's a downhill hike back to the ferry dock in town.

Coastal Treats

The beaches on Terre-de-Haut are gorgeous, and the best are within walking distance of Le Bourg. **La Plage de Pompierre** (☆), sometimes called Baie de Pont Pierre, is less than a mile northeast of town. The crescent-shaped golden-sand beach is shaded by palm

trees and the bay is protected by two rocky offshore islands. It's often crowded with locals and tourists, so try to arrive early or late in the day to enjoy the calm waters. Expect some company from the resident goats.

Anse du Pain-du-Sucre (☆), southwest of Le Bourg on the road that leads to Hotel Bois Joli, is divided into two semicircular beaches by spectacular 200-foot Sugar Loaf Hill. There's good snorkeling on both sides of the strip of land that joins the hill to the island. Nearby **Anse Crawen** (☆) is secluded and a fine place to work on your all-over tan. Get there by taking the path at the end of the main road, D214, which runs through town and along the northern coast.

Grande-Anse, directly across the island from the airport near Le Bourg, is a lovely long stretch of sand, but the water is too rough for swimming. Hikers will enjoy exploring the cliffs above the beach. Farther south, **Anse de Rodrigue** is calmer, and the water at **Baie de Marigot**, below Fort Napoléon, is gentle enough for children.

Adventures

Full-day escorted **island tours** leave Wednesday and Thursday from Saint-François and Pointe-à-Pitre for Les Saintes. Contact: **A.C.D.I.** in Saint-François, ☎ 81-71-76 or 55-30-30; fax 84-53-03.

The following companies are all located on the beach at Fond du Curé at the southern end of town.

Scuba excursions are offered by two companies. **Espace Plongée** in the Fond du Curé, ☎ 99-51-84, has English-speaking PADI instructors and guides.

Club de Plongée (Club Nautique), ☎ 99-54-25; fax 99-50-96, offers instruction and dive trips for beginners and certified divers. Closed Tuesday.

You may rent a **motorboat** for about $50 per hour from **Paul Lognos**, ☎ 99-54-08.

Other watersports equipment is available from **Guy and Christian Maisonneuve**, ☎ 99-53-13. Sailboards cost $18 per hour and Sunfish rent for $22 an hour. Waterskiers are charged $22 per half-hour.

Shop Till You Drop

Prices are high on Les Saintes, but you may discover a few unique items that are well worth the cost. Plan to make most of your purchases on Guadeloupe, but check out the following for original products that aren't available elsewhere:

KAZ A NOU
Le Bourg, ☎ 99-52-29

This artisan's workshop and store is near the church (look for the bell tower) north of the town square. Craftsman Pascal Foy creates miniature façades of traditional Créole houses that make unusual souvenirs. If you'll be on the island for a while, you can choose colors for your own original design.

MOAGANY
Le Bourg, ☎ 99-50-12; fax 99-55-69

Anyone who loves the sea will want to browse through this boutique owned by Yves Cohen, an artist and a sailor. He paints and silkscreens clothes in nautical themes. Gorgeous work. Yves speaks English. His shop is to the left (north) of the dock on the main road, across from Café de la Marine.

MARTINE COTTEN
Le Bourg, ☎ 99-55-22

You'll see this shop near the ferry dock. It's a good place to find posters and prints of the islands.

ULTRAMARINE
Le Bourg (no phone)

Just past the town hall on the square, look for this small bungalow that sells unusual handmade items from France, Africa and Haiti.

LA GALERIE DE LA BAIE (SEASIDE GALERIE)
Le Bourg

On the main road near the ferry dock, this group of small shops sells the usual souvenirs, plus ice cream, drinks and snacks, which can be enjoyed on the outdoor deck.

After Dark

LE JARDIN CREOLE
Ferry pier, Terre-de-Haut, ☎ 99-55-08
9am-2pm and 7pm-midnight
Closed Monday

The upstairs balcony of this casual, inexpensive bistro is the perfect place to sip a drink and people-watch. There's a good wine list, the owner speaks English, and the staff is friendly. Le Jardin Créole is mainly a bar, but food is also served. The menu features delicious selections from simple crêpes to full-course seafood dinners.

NILCE'S BAR
Ferry pier, Terre-de-Haut
☎ 99-56-80

Named for the beautiful Brazilian-born singer who is married to the owner, this club and bar features live music every night beginning soon after sunset. During the day, you can order snacks, pizzas and salads. There's no cover charge in the evening. Drinks are in the $5 to $8 range.

CHEZ CECILE
Fond du Curé, Terre-de-Haut
☎ 99-53-02

You'll find Cécile's across from the market on the north end of Fond du Curé. The patio is a great place to enjoy a drink and munch on accras.

Best Places to Stay

The following price scale is intended as a guideline to help you choose lodging to fit your vacation budget. It is based on the nightly cost of a double room during high-season, which normally runs mid-December through Easter week. As in France, taxes and service charges are included. Most hotels accept major credit cards, but be aware that small inns, rental agencies and individual villa owners may require cash or money order – probably in French francs.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Expensive	$150-$250/170€-227€
Moderate	$100-$150/116€-170€
Inexpensive	Less than $100/116€

HOTEL BOIS JOLI
Anse à Cointe, Terre-de-Haut
24 rooms and seven bungalows
Breakfast
☎ 99-52-53 or 99-50-38; fax 99-55-05
In the US, ☎ 800-322-2223
E-mail bois.joli@wanadoo.fr
Moderate

On a hillside overlooking the bay at the west end of the island, Bois Joli is perhaps the best-known hotel

on Les Saintes, mainly because it's the oldest. The main building houses simple guest rooms, some with air-conditioning and private baths. Most Americans will probably be more comfortable in one of the newer two-bedroom, one-bath bungalows that feature air-conditioning, refrigerator and patio. The bungalow rates are higher, but still within the moderate range. Watersports are available on the beach (additional charge), and guests can swim in the pool and dine in the restaurant overlooking Pain-du-Sucre Bay (Sugar Loaf Bay).

Signs posted around Terre-de-Haut and Terre-de-Bas advertize rooms for rent in private homes and small inns.

If you decide to stay at Bois Joli, two miles from the town, consider renting a motor scooter.

LE PARADIS SAINTOIS

Route de Pré-Cassin, Le Bourg de Terre-de-Haut
Three studios, two apartments
☎ 99-56-16; fax 99-56-11
E-mail paradis@minitel.net
Moderate

This large house located half a mile from town has five comfortable apartments. Each has a living area, kitchen, private bath and king-size beds. The swimming pool is surrounded by a large, shaded terrace with a panoramic view of the town and the bay.

TIP

Fête des Saintes (Celebration of the Saints) is held on August 15. If you plan to be here during that time, reserve a room in advance, and make dinner reservations upon arrival.

LA COLLINE
Fonds du Curé, Terre-de-Haut
Four apartments
☎ 55-47-34 or 99-53-29; fax 88-33-58
E-mail colline@www.softel.fr
Moderate

Spread out on a large hillside estate on the western outskirts of Le Bourg, La Colline offers peace and relaxation. The entire complex accommodates eight to 10 people in four unique suites. Two of the apartments have kitchenettes, but communal cooking facilities are located on a large covered terrace.

Guests may also use the barbecue grill, washing machine and swimming pool. All of the suites have private baths and TVs, and three are air-conditioned. The beach and town are within walking distance.

HOTEL LE KANAOA
Anse Marie, Terre-de-Haut
18 rooms and suites
☎ 99-51-36; fax 99-55-04
Moderate

Right on the bay near Fort Napoléon, this basic Créole-style hotel features air-conditioned rooms, a waterfront restaurant and a swimming pool.

AUBERGE DES PETITS SAINTS AUX ANACARDIERS
La Savanne, Terre-de-Haut
10 rooms, two bungalows and one villa sleeping four to six people
Continental breakfast
☎ 99-50-99; fax 99-54-51
In the US, ☎ 800-322-2223
Moderate

Once the residence of mayor Robert Joyeux (the island's mayor from 1977 until his retirement in 2000),

this charming inn located in a garden on a hill above the village is named for the anacardier (cashew) trees that shade the estate. Guests are treated to an antiques-filled lobby, air-conditioned rooms and a swimming pool with a great view of the harbor. The highly-regarded Anacardiers Restaurant is not to be missed (see below). Town is a short walk away, but you'll want a motorbike to get to the best beaches.

Not all rooms at Anacardiers have a private bath, so be sure to ask when making a reservation.

Best Places to Eat

The two best treats on the islands are homemade coconut ice cream sold from mobile carts, and still-warm Tourment d'Amour sold by young Santoises at the ferry dock. This local specialty, translated as "agony of love," is a tart filled with some type of fruit jam, which usually includes coconut.

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Expensive	More than $30/35€
Moderate	$20-$30/23€-35€
Inexpensive	$10-$20/11€-23€
Bargain	Less than $10/11€

LES PETITS SAINTS AUX ANACADIERS
La Savanne, Terre-de-Haut
☎ 99-50-99; fax 99-54-51
6:30-10pm
Reservations suggested for dinner
Inexpensive

This hillside restaurant, located in the hotel with the same name, is owned by Jean-Paul Colas and Didier Spindler, who once owned Deux Gros Restaurant on Guadeloupe. These cheerful chefs are famous for turning out a fixed-price gourmet dinner every day.

The three-course dinner is served on the restaurant's verandah.

LA SALADERIE
Le Bourg, Terre-de-Haut, D214
☎ 99-53-43
Noon-2pm and 7-9pm
Closed Tuesday
Reservations suggested for dinner
Inexpensive/Moderate

This casual seaside restaurant is on the coast road north of the ferry dock near Anse Mire. The pizza, pasta and salads are good. Grilled fish dinners are served with fresh vegetables.

TIP

Call ahead to request the specialty of the house, fish fondue. You cook your own fish in boiling bouillon right at the table, then dip it in a selection of sauces.

CAFE DE LA MARINE
Mouillage, Terre-de-Haut, D214
☎ 99-53-78
11:30am-2:30pm and 7:30-10pm
Expensive

Call ahead to reserve a table with a view of the bay at La Marine.

Seafood is the specialty. It's pricy, but worth it. Shoppers will want to check out the jewelry and other locally-made items in the boutique.

LES AMANDIERS
Le Bourg, Terre-de-Haut, Place de la Mairie
☎ 99-56-77
Noon-2:30pm and 7-11:30pm
Reservations recommended for dinner
Inexpensive

Located on the town square, this casual café offers indoor and outdoor dining. Lunch is a fixed-price meal featuring fish, salad, vegetables and dessert. The dinner menu highlights Créole specialties such as crayfish and conch.

TIP

For excellent thin-crust pizza, try **Le Genois** or **La Marine**, both waterside establishments. They are located north of the ferry dock on the main road.

Marie-Galante

Overview

It's rather puzzling that an island as large and beautiful as Marie-Galante is still so untouched by tourism. Before someone figures out the reason and comes up with a solution, pack your bag and take advantage of this mystifying oversight.

The large (60 square miles), flat, roundish island lies about 20 miles south of Grande-Terre. Three main towns are home to 13,000 friendly residents, and the ruins of nearly 100 picturesque stone windmills dot the countryside. There's not a lot to do here, but the beaches are superb and a handful of inns, shops and restaurants provide ample conveniences.

A deep fracture runs down the center of Marie-Galante's coral-and-limestone plateau, separating the island into two distinct pieces. The northern section is lower and called Les Bas. The southern section is known as Les Hauts. There isn't much rainfall, which makes the plains fertile and ideal for raising sugarcane.

★ DID YOU KNOW?

Virtually all of the sugar crop produced on Marie-Galante is distilled into rum, and the island has a special permit to make 59% pure spirits.

Office of Tourism

Office du Tourisme
Rue du Fort, Grand-Bourg
☎ 97-56-51; fax 97-56-54

The Tourism Office is open 8am-1pm and 2-6pm Monday-Wednesday and 8am-2pm Thursday-Saturday. It's closed on Sunday.

A Brief History

The Carib Indians kept Christopher Columbus from spending any time on Marie-Galante when he docked there in 1493. He named the huge island plateau after one of his ships, *Santa Maria la Galante*, then sailed on to friendlier shores. The French didn't find the Caribs in any better humor when they attempted to colonize between 1648 and 1653. Finally, in 1660, French troops were sent to put an end to Amerindian resistance, and all native survivors were banished to Dominica.

The island's first inhabitants, Arawak Indians, called the island "Kallina."

With the island safely to themselves, the French began to settle Marie-Galante in earnest. By the end of the 17th century, about a thousand colonists had set up successful farms and sugar refineries, and other Europeans were eyeing the isolated settlement with greed. English and Dutch invasions made life hard for the French inhabitants, and the island changed ownership several times before France acquired permanent possession in 1815. Earthquakes and hurricanes often wreaked havoc on the towns and plantations, but the countryside remained literally covered in sugarcane, and windmills stood on every square mile.

Today, the island produces about 140,000 tons of sugar, which is turned into the world's best rum. Most residents who aren't involved in raising sugar or distilling rum are fishermen. Tourism makes up the third most important part of the island's economy, but the island is still rural, laid-back and roomy.

Traditional ox carts still carry crops in from the fields, and you may see them trudging along the narrow back roads.

Getting to Marie-Galante

Arrival By Air

Air Caraïbes flies from Pointe-à-Pitre to the airfield on the south coast of Marie-Galante three times per day Monday through Saturday, and once on Sundays. **Marie-Galante Aviation** flies from Saint-François to the same airfield twice a day. Round-trip fares are about 57€/$50 from Pointe-à-Pitre and 80€/$70 from Saint-François.

AIRLINE INFORMATION	
Air Caraïbes	On Guadeloupe: ☎ 82-47-00; fax 82-47-48 On Marie-Galante: ☎ 97-82-21

Arrival By Sea

Four companies offer year-round ferry service from Quai de La Darse in Point-à-Pitre to Grand-Bourg and Saint-Louis on Marie-Galante. Limited crossings are made from Saint-François during the summer, but additional boats are added during peak tourist season. Check the postings on the ticket booth at the docks or call ahead to ask about schedules and rates. Expect the round-trip fare to be about 28€/$25, regardless of the origination and destination points.

L'Express des Iles, ☎ 83-12-45 in Pointe-à-Pitre; fax 91-11-05.

Brudey Frères, ☎ 90-04-48; fax 82-15-62.

Amanda Galante (car ferry), ☎ 91-02-45.

T.M.C. Archipel, ☎ 83-19-80; fax 83-66-68.

Getting Around

Minivans provide public transportation between the three main towns every day except Sunday, but schedules are erratic. You can also find taxis, but rarely when you need them most. If you're on a day-trip or hope to see most of the sites, organized tours and self-drive vehicles are the best choices.

One national highway, N9, links Grand-Bourg to Capesterre and Saint-Louis, and a network of secondary D roads connects outlying areas. Since traffic is usually light and the terrain flat, you can easily get around by bike, motor scooter or car. However, it's a long haul from one side of the island to another, so a car is probably the best choice for most people.

Expect to put down a major credit card or cash deposit to cover any damages in the event of an accident.

Car rental companies are located at the airport and in the main towns. Bicycles and scooters can be rented at the ferry docks.

TIP

If you will be on Marie-Galante during a holiday or peak tourist season, reserve a car in advance with one of the US companies before you go.

Car rates are about 36€/$32 per day; scooters rent for around 24€/$21 a day; and daily rental on a bike is approximately 12€/$11.

CAR/SCOOTER & BICYCLE RENTAL COMPANIES	
Major US Car Rental Companies	
Budget, Grand-Bourg	☎ 97-57-81; fax 97-57-87 In the US, ☎ 800-472-3325
Jumbo Car/Thrifty, Grand-Bourg	☎ 97-54-89; fax 97-54-90 In the US, ☎ 800-367-2277
Local Car Rental Companies	
Megauto	In Grand-Bourg: ☎ 97-98-75 In Saint-Louis: ☎ 97-15-97
Location 2000 (cars & scooters)	In Grand-Bourg: ☎ 97-12-83 In Saint-Louis: ☎ 97-04-46
Loca Sol (4x4s, scooters, cars), Grand-Bourg	☎ 97-76-58
Chez Christian/Location de VTT (bicycles), Grand-Bourg	☎ 97-77-97
Chez Serge Hurel (bicycles), Saint-Louis	☎ 97-14-32

French law requires you to wear a helmet when driving a motor scooter.

You'll need a valid driver's license in order to rent a motor vehicle.

Guided Tours

You can join an organized tour when you buy your ferry ticket on Guadeloupe, or look for a tour representative at the dock or airport after you arrive on Marie-Galante. Most guides do not speak English, so be sure to have a brief conversation before you hand over your money and hop into a van with someone who promises to show you the sites. The tourist office in Grand-Bourg also can recommend English-speaking guides.

Philippe Bavarday is a member of Gîtes de France, gives guided tours in English and rents four air-conditioned rooms in his lovely home near the coast. ☎ 97-81-97.

Exploring the Island

Grand-Bourg

Grand-Bourg is not the prettiest part of Marie-Galante, but if you look beyond its utilitarian architecture, you'll find a charming town. Most activity centers around the port, where ferries shuttle back and forth to Guadeloupe. Don't plan to spend much time here, but a few sites are worth seeking out.

Au Mouillage (the anchorage) exhibits historical photos and marine objects from Marie-Galante's past. Stop in for a quick orientation and to pick up the brochure on the history of the island. If you speak French, ask for Madame Saint-Martin Lima, the founder and head cheerleader. From the dock, the tiny museum is to the right on Rue de la Marine. ☎ 97-59-67.

Follow Rue de l'Eglise (the church road) to its namesake, which sits in a lovely shaded square. Yellow-colored **Notre-Dame-de-Marie-Galante** is one of the few buildings to survive a devastating fire that wiped out Grand-Bourg in 1838. Vendors outside the church guarantee plenty of activity, and you may want to just sit on a bench with a cool drink and watch. A little farther up the road is the art-deco town hall and hospital designed by well-known architect Ali Tur.

Plage de Grand-Bourg is a golden-sand beach with calm shallow water. If you don't have transportation, and simply want to spend some time in the sun, this is an okay spot, but the shacks along the water detract

from the beauty. Better beaches are a short distance away.

Touring Les Bas

Along the coast road (D203) between Grand-Bourg and the airport, is one of the most captivating sites on the island, **Château Murat** (☆). Currently being restored to its original grandeur, this 18th-century manor house is part of an immense sugar plantation includes a windmill, refinery and garden. Originally called Habitation Poisson (fish house), the prosperous estate took the name of its owner when it was bought in 1839 by Dominique Murat. At one time, 300 slaves worked the vast sugar fields that surround the imposing neoclassical mansion.

When sugar prices plummeted at the end of the 19th century, the plantation couldn't make ends meet, and the property was abandoned.

After years of neglect, the château is being renovated and an Ecomusée (eco-museum) has been added to display various exhibits detailing life on the island. You can visit the grounds at any time, and the museum is open 8:30am-1pm and 2:30-5:30pm daily. ☎ 97-94-41.

From Château Murat, go back toward Grand-Bourg and pick up N9, which will take you inland to Distillerie Bielle. Along the way you will pass a sprinkling of homes and inns and the minuscule village of Pirogue.

Mare au Punch

The pond on the east side of the road just before the village is called Mare au Punch because of an incident that allegedly occurred in 1848. Islanders say that newly-emancipated slaves became furious with their employer for trying to cheat them out of their rightful wages. In a rage, they gathered all the rum and sugar on the plantation and dumped it into the pond. The ensuing punch party reportedly had a mollifying effect on labor relations.

To reach **Distillerie Bielle** (☆), continue on past Pirogue until you see the sign that points the way down the Chemin de Bielle to the distillery. Visitors are welcome every morning except Sunday, and the rum shop is open 9am-1pm. The drawing card here is deliciously provocative chocolate and coconut rums. ☎ 97-93-62.

Tatie Zézette *(Auntie Zézette) on the Feuillère beach off N9 in Capesterre, is the place for fried chicken or court-bouillon in homey surroundings.* ☎ *97- 36-02.*

It's possible to continue on to Capesterre on N9, but if you go back to the coast road, you'll come to two picturesque beaches. **Plage de Petite Anse** is just past the airport. Here, you can have a snack at the nearby café or enjoy a picnic at one of the shaded tables. A restroom is nearby. The better choice is the next beach, **Plage de la Feuillière** (☆). Many consider Ferrière the most beautiful beach on Marie-Galante, and among the most stunning on all the Guadeloupean islands. Surprisingly, it is less crowded than other beaches, or perhaps it only seems so because of its long stretch of sand. Protective coral reefs offshore break the waves and make this a great spot for swimming and snorkeling.

Before you leave this area, drive on to **les Galeries** (☆), just past Capesterre off the coastal road Chemin des Galets. Watch closely for a sign marking the path that cuts between two hills and the forest and leads to the water. When you arrive at the coast, you will find gorgeous cliffs that were sculpted underwater before the plateau of Marie-Galante raised itself from the sea. The view of Ilet Mathurine is outstanding.

Avid spelunkers will want to explore **Trou à Diable** (devil's hole), but for others it might be a waste of time. A sign points the way off D202 to a trail that goes quite a distance through a field and forest before it arrives at the cave. Guides are recommended and ropes are essential, but no laws prevent you from venturing as far as you wish.

WARNING

If you want to explore more than the first part of the cave, you must wear protective gear to guard against breathing in fungus spores that grow deep inside.

Touring Les Hauts

Magnificent views await those who tour the northern part of Marie-Galante. At **Gueule du Grand Gouffre** (☆), "mouth of the big gulf/chasm," you can watch waves crash against the rocks and spew up into the giant stone arch caused when a hurricane knocked a hole in the cliffs. Get to this spot by driving north on D202, then west on the main road (D201) that heads northwest toward Grosse Pointe and Vieux Fort.

Stop at Caye Plate, just east of Gueule du Grand Gouffre, for a stunning panoramic view from the top of the steep cliffs.

Vieux Fort is where the first French colonists were slaughtered by angry Caribs. The beach is called both **Anse du Vieux Fort** and **Plage du Massacre** (☆) in memory of these first settlers. More rugged and rural than beaches to the south, this beautiful beach is ideal for relaxation and solitude. It has been used in photographs publicizing Guadeloupe. Nearby **Anse Canot** is an equally fine strip of soft sand. Both have calm water, but Vieux Fort is better for children.

Saint-Louis is a simple fishing village where ferries from Guadeloupe dock. If you shun crowds, you may prefer to arrive here, as it receives fewer vessels. **Plage de Folle-Anse** (☆), on the southern edge of town, is 1.2 miles long, the lengthiest beach on Marie-Galante. It's also the site of the island's newest and largest resort, Hotel Cohoba, which makes it a particularly appealing destination.

Poisson means fish, not poison, but there are those who argue the relevance of the latter meaning.

Well-known Père Labat white rum is made at **Distillerie Poisson** (☆), located off N9 between Saint-Louis and Grand-Bourg. Visitors are welcome at the museum and tasting room 9:30am-noon every day, ☎ 97-77-42.

Adventures

Scuba excursions are offered by **Club de Plongée Man' Balaou**, Murat, Grand-Bourg. Dive trips go out at 9am and 2pm each day. ☎ 97-75-24; fax 97-75-24 (reservations suggested).

Best Places to Stay

The following price scale is intended as a guideline to help you choose lodging to fit your vacation budget. It is based on the cost of a double room during high-season, which normally runs mid-December through Easter week. As in France, taxes and service charges are included. Most hotels accept major credit cards, but be aware that small inns, rental agencies and individual villa owners may require cash or money order – probably in French francs.

For a list of gîtes on Marie-Galante, contact ***Gîtes de France in Guadeloupe****,* ☎ *91-64-33; fax 91-45-40.*

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
Expensive	$150-$200/170€-227€
Moderate	$100-$150/116€-170€
Inexpensive	Less than $100/116€

HOTEL COHOBA
Folle Anse, Saint-Louis 97134
100 rooms
Continental breakfast
☎ 97-50-50; fax 97-17-11
In the US, ☎ 800-322-2223; fax 805-967-7798
www.cohoba.gp
Moderate/Expensive

The opening of this large, three-star hotel in December 1998 is proof that the big players have great plans for Marie-Galante's future. Located on the exquisite white sand of Folle Anse near Saint-Louis, the Créole-style complex circles a big swimming pool. Two restaurants and a beachside bar serve meals and snacks throughout the day, and a variety of activities are offered.

Accommodations are in bungalows, suites with kitchenettes, and guest rooms in a colonial greathouse.

The Cohoba Hotel, one of the French Leader Hotels, is the only first-class resort on the island.

Each is air-conditioned and has a TV, hair dryer, safe and minibar. Shower rooms are separate from the toilet area. Entertainment is scheduled several times each week, and watersports equipment is available for rent on the beach. Most of the staff speaks English.

LE SALUT
Marina, Saint-Louis
15 rooms
☎ 97-02-67
Inexpensive

Located right in town near the marina, this simple hotel offers convenience, but few amenities. Toilets are located across the hall from the clean rooms, only a few of which are air-conditioned.

Be sure to request a room with air-conditioning at Le Soleil.

LE SOLEIL LEVANT
Morne des Pères, Place du Marché, Capesterre
16 rooms, suites and bungalows
Continental breakfast
☎ 97-31-55; fax 97-41-65
Inexpensive

The view from this hillside inn is wonderful, and you can walk to town in five minutes and to the beach in 10. Basic suites have kitchenettes, and the one- and two-bedroom bungalows have full kitchens.

HOTEL HAJO
Waterfront, Capesterre
6 rooms
☎ 97-32-76
Inexpensive

This old-world inn on the water offers ocean views from all rooms. Ceiling fans circulate sea breezes, each simple room has a private bath, and the palm-shaded garden is lovely.

VILLAGE DE MENARD
Menard (near Vieux Fort), Saint-Louis
7 bungalows
Breakfast
☎ 97-09-45; fax 97-15-40
E-mail magtour@outremer.com
Moderate

These charming red-roofed bungalows are located at the far end of the island, 12 miles from the airport. The nearby beaches of Anse Carnot and Massacre are unspoiled and beautiful, and there's also a pool.

Best Places to Eat

ALIVE! PRICE SCALE	
All prices are given in US dollars.	
Expensive	More than $30/35€
Moderate	$20-$30/23€-35€
Inexpensive	$10-$20/11€-23€
Bargain	Less than $10/11€

LE TOULOULOU
Plage de la Petite Anse, Capesterre
☎ 97-32-63
French/Créole
Closed Sunday and Monday evenings
Inexpensive/Moderate

On Friday and Saturday nights and holidays, locals and tourists gather here to dance to live music. But it's also a popular eatery. Try the grilled fish with fresh herbs, conch in puff pastry or the colombo cabri (goat curry). Meals are served on a beachside patio.

Cafés specializing in seafood and a couple of good pizza shops can be found near the ferry dock in Grand-Bourg.

L'AUBERGE DE LA ROCHE D'OR
Capesterre, one mile west of town on N9
☎ 97-37-42
Créole
Closed Wednesdays and Sundays for dinner
Moderate/Expensive

Excellent meals are served in this pretty dining room decorated with madras and tropical plants. You will be warmly welcomed at this family-run restaurant.

Sample dishes include conch in coconut milk, shrimp in Créole sauce, snapper topped with crayfish.

LA MARIA-GALANDA CHEZ NINA
Rue Jeanne d'Arc, Grand-Bourg
☎ 97-50-56
Mixed menu
Inexpensive

The setting is as pleasing as the food at this patio restaurant that features a variety of cuisines. Try the paella or lasagna if you're tired of Créole.

AUBERGE DE L'ARBRE A PAIN
Rue Jeanne d'Arc, Grand-Bourg
☎ 97-73-69
Reservations required
Moderate

This small restaurant is situated inside the hotel of the same name in the center of town, near the harbor. Meals are served on the garden patio, and you can choose such specialties as octopus or grilled conch.

A KA PAT
Saint-Louis, D205 on Plage de Folle Anse
☎ 97-05-74
Seafood
Inexpensive

This simple shack right on the beach serves terrific fresh fish.

LES CENT MOULINS
65 rue Beaurenon, near Grand-Bourg
☎ 97-88-01
French
Inexpensive
11:30am-2:30pm and 7:30-9:30pm
Closed Tuesday

Seafood followed by home-made ice cream is the perfect meal at this restaurant run by proprietors Laurence and Albert. Other choices include duck served with a honey sauce and clams fricassée. Everything is prepared with locally grown produce.

Guadeloupe & the Outer Islands A-Z

Airlines

American Eagle, ☎ 83-62-62; in the US, ☎ 800-443-7300; www.aa.com.

Air Canada, ☎ 21-12-77; in the US, ☎ 800-361-8620.

Air France, ☎ 21-13-03; in the US, ☎ 800-237-2747.

Air Caraïbes (Formerly Air Guadeloupe/Air Martinique), ☎ 82-47-00; fax 82-47-48; www.aircaraibes.com.

LIAT, ☎ 21-13-93; in the US, ☎ 800-468-0482; fax 212-545-8474; www.liat.com.

Airport

Aéroport Pole Caraïbes outside Pointe-à-Pitre, ☎ 21-14-72.

Area

Grande-Terre and Basse-Terre have a total land area of 530 square miles.

Area Code

To call Guadeloupe from the US, dial 011-590-590, then the six-digit number; to call within the island, dial 590, then the number.

ATMs

Twenty-four hour ATMs are conveniently located at the airport, most banks, and major shopping areas throughout the island.

Banking

Banks are open Monday through Friday from 8am to noon and from 2 to 4pm. A few major banks have branches that are open in large towns on Saturdays, but don't get caught without cash over the weekends or on holidays.

Buses

Public buses run from 5am to 6pm. Stops are marked *Arrêt-Bus*, and buses will usually stop when flagged anywhere along the route.

Camping

Camping Traversée is a campground south of Pointe-Noire on the west coast of Basse-Terre, ☎ 98-21-23. Campers sometimes set up near Sainte-Anne and Deshaies, and tents are usually allowed on public land with a permit from the towns mayor. During local school vacations, some beaches allow overnight camping, but check with the mayor's office to be sure.

You may rent a fully-equipped camper from **Camping Cars Vert Bleu** in Deshaies, ☎ 28-51-25.

Capital

Basse-Terre City

Car Rental Agencies

Local numbers for national agencies:

Avis, ☎ 21-13-54

Budget, ☎ 90-26-37

Hertz, ☎ 84-57-94

Euro/Dollar, ☎ 82-75-42

Thrifty, ☎ 20-13-60

Local numbers for local companies:

Citer, ☎ 82-10-94

Soltour, ☎ 83-39-15

Eurocar, ☎ 82-50-51

Eurorent, ☎ 91-42-16

Transcar, ☎ 91-64-80

Zami, ☎ 83-94-32

Pops, ☎ 83-39-73

Climate

The air temperature on Guadeloupe ranges between 72°F and 90°F, and the water is a pleasant 77°F to 82°F all year. Humidity averages 77%, with a dry season running from February to June, and a rainy season froom July to January. However, rain showers fall year-round in the mountains, and Basse-Terre is generally wetter than Grande-Terre. The sun shines for parts of most days and trade winds prevent summer days from becoming too hot. Occasional hurricanes occur in the area from late August through October.

Credit Cards

Most banks, ATMs, hotels, and restaurants accept major credit cards. However, small businesses, especially in outlying villages, may not be equipped to handle credit cards.

Currency

Through December, 2001, the French Franc (FF) will be the official currency on Guadeloupe. On January 1,

2002, the island will join France and 11 other Western European nations in converting to the euro (€). All francs will be out of circulation on or before February 28, 2002.

At publication, the French franc was exchanging at a rate of approximately 7.5FF per US dollar, the euro was valued at around .86€ per US dollar, 60 British pence and 1.33 Canadian dollars. This guide uses the exchange rate of US$1=7.5 FF or 1.16€. Both rates are subject to change due to currency fluctuation.

Departure Tax

There is no departure tax.

Documents

Citizens of the US and Canada who are traveling for pleasure may enter Guadeloupe and stay up to three months by showing a valid passport or other proof of citizenship, which can be an expired passport (up to five years out of date), an official birth certificate, or a valid voter registration card *plus* a government-approved photo ID, such as a driver's license. All visitors must show a return or onward ticket off the island.

Dress

Casual sports clothes are suitable during the day, but swimsuits are out of place on city streets. In the evening, casual slacks and shirts are acceptable for both men and women, though women may prefer to wear a casual dress in finer restaurants. Sweaters and rain

protection are needed at times, especially in the mountains. Boots are necessary for hiking in the rainforest.

Drinking Water

Tap water is safe to drink, but never drink from rivers or lakes because of the danger of parasites (bilharzia). Bottled water is readily available, including local brands such as Matouba and Capes. In restaurants, you will usually be served and charged for bottled water unless you ask for *l'eau du robinet*, tap water.

Driving

Driving is on the right side, road signs and regulations conform to European standards, and the 1,225-mile road system is very good, due to the islands' connection with France. The speed limit is 110 kmh/66 mph on multi-lane highways, and 80 kmh/48 mph on two-lane highways. However, islanders like to speed, so be cautious.

Driving Permit

A US or Canadian driver's license is valid on Guadeloupe for up to 20 days. After that, an International Drivers Permit is required.

Electricity

Electricity is 220 volts AC, 50 cycles, and most places have French-style outlets. You'll need a transformer to convert electricity and a plug adapter in order to operate appliances made for use in the United States.

Emergency

Medical . . . . . ☎ 15

Police. . . . . ☎ 17

Fire Department. . . . . ☎ 18

For non-emergency calls to police, dial ☎ 89-77-17 in Pointe-à-Pitre and ☎ 81-11-55 in Basse-Terre.

Ferry Service

L'Express des Iles . . . . . ☎ 83-12-45

Brudy Frères . . . . . ☎ 90-04-48

Amanda Galante . . . . . ☎ 91-02-45

Compagnie Maritime Frères . ☎ 21-69-51

Socimade. . . . . ☎ 83-32-67

Sotramade . . . . . ☎ 88-58-06

Le Mistral . . . . . ☎ 88-48-63

Internet

Many websites with information on Guadeloupe are in French. A very comprehensive English-language site is www.antilles-info-tourisme.com/guadeloupe/.

Language

The official language is French, but most residents also speak Créole. Many people in tourist locations speak English, but it is helpful to carry a French phrase book.

Location

Guadeloupe is 310 miles south of San Juan, Puerto Rico and 125 miles south of the sister islands of St. Martin and St. Barts.

Maps

Free maps are easily attainable from tourist offices, car rental agencies, and hotels. The Institut Géographique National (IGN) publishes a good detailed map, Number 510. You can find it and others at bookstores all around the island.

Marriage Requirements

One of the two people wishing to marry must live on the island for at least a month and show a residency card. Both must show birth certificates, a certificate of good conduct, which includes proof of being single, a medical certificate with proof of a clean blood test, and a French translation of any documents written in English.

Political Status

Département and Région of France.

Population

408,000

Store Hours

Stores are usually open from 8 am to noon and 2 to 6 pm weekdays. Many stores are open on Saturday mornings, but close at noon or 1 pm. In general, stores are closed all day Sundays and holidays, and some close on Wednesday afternoons.

Taxes and Tips

Service and tax are included in the price at restaurants, but it is customary to leave a little change on the table, especially if the server is friendly and efficient.

There is no arrival or departure tax.

Taxis

Private taxis cover the entire island and are easily found at the airport, cruise-ship dock, and major hotels. All taxis are equipped with meters and legally add a 40% surcharge to all fares between 9 pm and 7 am and on Sundays and holidays.

Cabs may be called at ☎ 20-74-74 or 82-96-69.

Telephone

You will need a telephone card, *télécarte*, to make a local or long-distance call on Guadeloupe. Buy the cards at any post office or newspaer stand for either 36FF/6€/$5 or 90FF/15€/$13, depending on the length of calling time you want.

For information, ☎ 12.

Local calls require 590 plus the six-digit number.

To call from the United States, dial 011 + 590-590 + six-digit local number. To call the United States from Guadeloupe, dial 19 + 1 + area code + local number.

To call mobile phones from the US, dial 011 + 590-690 + the local number. Call mobile phones from on the island by dialing 0690 + the local number.

Time

Most schedules use a 24-hour clock, so a ferry leaving at three in the afternoon will list its departure as 15:00.

Guadeloupe is on Atlantic time year-round. Therefore, the time is one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time and the same as Eastern Daylight Time.

The sun rises between 5 and 6am and sets between 6 and 6:30pm year-round. This lack of variation is due to the proximity of Guadeloupe and Martinique to the equator.

Tourist Information

The main tourist office:

Office Départmental du Tourisme de la Guadeloupe
5 Square de la Banque
Pointe-à-Pitre
☎ 82-09-30; fax 83-89-22

Local offices are found in major towns, including Basse-Terre, ☎ 81-24-83; Saint-François, ☎ 88-48-74; and Sainte-Anne, ☎ 88-09-49.

In the US:

French Government Tourist Office
444 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10022
☎ 410-286-8310

In Canada:

French Government Tourist Office
1981 Ave. McGill College (490)
Montreal, Que., H3A 2W9
☎ 514-288-4264